

TISZA TALES





TO PLOW A BED FOR THE TISZA

TISZA TALES

By **ROSIKA SCHWIMMER**
Illustrations by **Willy Pogány**



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CHILDREN'S ROOM

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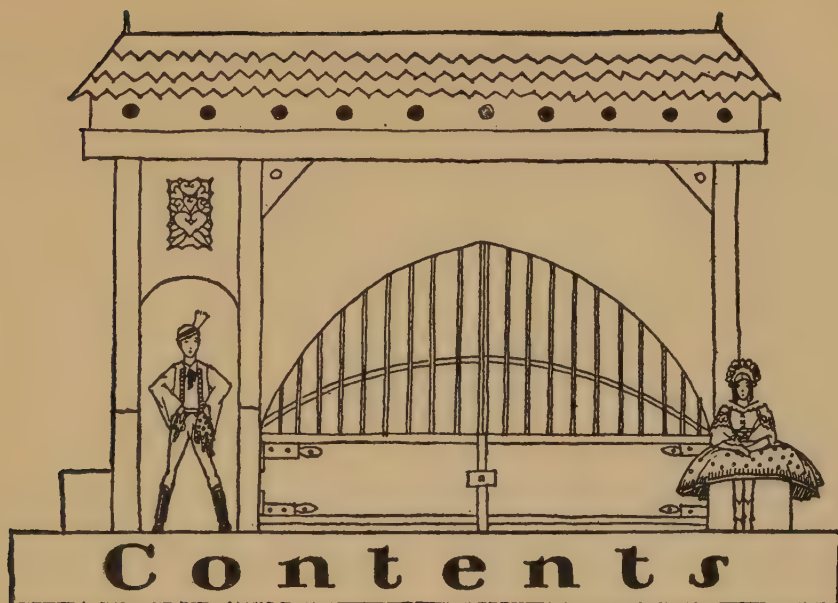
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FIRST EDITION

TO
"MY BEST FRIEND"
GEORGIA LLOYD
AN AMERICAN CHILD



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TISZA TALES
TOLD AND RETOLD
BY
ROSIKA SCHWIMMER



Fishermen on the Tisza

A SULTRY summer day drew to its close, and the heat on the bank of the Tisza gave way to a gentle breeze. The fishermen who had sought shelter in the fishing hut began to revive from the exhaustion caused by the merciless sun, and the younger men were soon in social mood and good appetite. Old fisherman Karád, the beloved head of the group, however, still kept his lazy silence. He did not stir; he just shifted his long-stemmed pipe from the left corner of his mouth to the right and showed no interest in the chatter of the others.

A starless dark sky covered the endless prairie through

which the Tisza rolled its slow-flowing yellow course. Supper time came, and the hungry company soon had a fire blazing. On the fire a kettle, and in the kettle, fish boiling. The savory flavor tickled Karád's nostrils, and without moving his head his eyes began to follow the movements of the young fishermen as they eagerly put in all the good things needed in the preparation of that king of all dishes, the *hal-paprikás*. Old Karád had to take the pipe out of his mouth. He did it reluctantly, but he had to, because his mouth watered so from the delicious flavor steaming out of the kettle and growing more and more appetizing. If he hadn't taken out the pipe, the water would have dripped down the stem of it and ruined his tobacco. And it was too good tobacco to be wasted.

How those boys went at it! One chopped the onions. Another poured salt into the kettle. But most important was the task of the third. Aware of his responsibility, he wrinkled his brow as he slowly and carefully sprinkled paprika, the flavoring red-hot pepper, into the kettle. Because the fish and the paprika are the soul of the *hal-paprikás* of which the Hungarians are so proud that they have made it their national dish.

"Just another touch of salt and one spoonful more of paprika," whispered another young fisherman. He had appointed himself tasting-master. Conscientiously fulfilling his task, he swallowed a few spoonfuls of the boiling hot, luscious liquid.

With due solemnity, rich slices of delicious *kecsege* and

Tisza carp were lowered into the kettle. The fishermen all looked hungrily at the kettle, as if for ages they had not eaten their beloved dish. Yet they had eaten *hal-paprikás* the day before, and the day before the day before, and every day before that as far back as any one of them would have been able to remember. The Hungarian fisherman, the *halász*, never tires of *hal-paprikás*. Just as the *gulyás*, the Hungarian cowboy, never tires of *gulyás*, the dish of beef in paprika sauce to which he lends his own name. "Well, boys," drawled old Karád, "hurry along, hustle a bit, I am getting hungry."

Now the old man must have been very hungry indeed to break the silence which goes with the ritual of cooking paprika fish. No conversation while *hal-paprikás* is prepared is an old and sacred rule. The self-appointed taster took several more spoonfuls of the bubbling juice, and his face grew more and more radiant until he whispered in an ecstasy: "The *paprika-hal* is perfect.

Very shortly the company fell to, with good appetite. And just as you do not talk while you are cooking *paprika-hal*, even so you keep from conversing while you eat this lordly dish. All the pent-up talk, however, broke out when they had had their fill. With broad gestures and big pieces of the rich white bread, which is the Hungarian peasant's basic food, they thoroughly cleaned out their plates. Round and round they wiped them with the bread, as if they were endeavoring to rub off the glaze of the heavy crockery.

They swallowed the last bits of bread and used their wide linen sleeves as napkins. Then a great sigh of satisfaction rose toward the ceiling of the fisher hut, and conversation started. It started slowly. Hungarian peasants are lazy-tongued. They like a good talk, but it must not be such undignified babble as the gentry indulges in.

Through slow-moving lips, partly hidden under heavy but well-waxed moustaches, sentences flew in heavy rhythm. Slowly, as slowly as the yellow waves of the blond Tisza move in their journey to the Danube.

"Well, Karád *bácsi*" (Uncle Karád), ventured one of the young fishermen, "won't you tell us a story?"

"Always 'Karád *bácsi*', always 'tell a story,'" grumbled the old fisherman. But a twinkle in his eye showed that he didn't mind it really. He just marked time pretending to be tired of always being called to tell tales. He knew that no fisherman told a story better than he, and he really enjoyed telling them. Out of the embroidered leather pouch he filled his pipe and then handed the tobacco to his young companions. The pouch made its round, and the fishermen settled in comfortable attitudes, Karád *bácsi* leisurely and important in the center.

"Well, boys, whose turn is it to choose the tale I am to tell?"

It was an established custom among the group to take turn in selecting the kind of story they wanted to hear.

"My turn," said the boy who had chopped the onions for the paprika-fish, "and, Karád *bácsi*, won't you tell the story

of the origin of our beloved Tizsa? You promised me the other day to tell it when I wanted to hear it."

The eyes of the old man lighted up. The others looked at him with pleasant expectation. There is nothing in the whole world a Hungarian fisherman loves more than the Tizsa. Of the four rivers symbolizing the waters of Hungary in the coat of arms of that country only the Tizsa is entirely Hungarian. It springs from Hungarian soil, rolls through its wheat-covered endless lowland, and spends itself in the Danube. The other three rivers appearing in the coat of arms of Hungary are international. Hungary shares them with other countries. So the good and foolish Hungarian fishermen cling to the belief that because the Tizsa never leaves the boundaries of the country it must be the most wonderful river in all the world. "Yes, do tell us of our own Tizsa," the others added to the request of their spokesmen. "Do, please!"

Karád *bácsi* shifted the pipe from one corner of his mouth to the other. Then he stroked his moustache, first the left side with his left hand, then the right side with the right. And now he was all prepared to tell and the others to listen.



The origin of the river Tisza

IT WAS long, long ago, quite a time ago. Back when the world was created. Everything was finished. The whole world. Mountains were created, and valleys, meadows, and woods, and the sun and the moon and the stars. All the small rivers were created and all the large rivers, only the Tisza was still standing at the footstool of the Creator. "Well, poor creature, what am I to do with you?" asked the Father of Creation, looking down kindly at the lonely Tisza.

"Let me attend to him, my father," said an archangel. Gently approaching the forlorn, drooping creature, he said to the Tisza, "Follow me." The archangel took a golden plow and harnessed a donkey to it. "Go and plow a furrow across the land until you reach the Duna" (Danube), he

bade the donkey. "And thou, follow in the furrow plowed for thee," he bade the Tisza.

With a gurgling sigh of relief the Tisza started, as bidden, in the furrow the obedient donkey was plowing.

The bed prepared for the river was comfortable and straight for a while. But after a time the donkey became restless. All along its path, the most appetizing thistles tempted the hard-working animal. It didn't dare to stop. It knew it had to plow all along the country to make the Tisza a river big enough to deserve a place in the coat of arms of the Magyars.

But the work was hard and the thistles nodded invitingly. Hunger and obedience fought with each other in the tortured conscience of the poor animal, until all of a sudden a solution flashed through his mind. He would not stop to fill himself with the delicious thistles, so he would not disobey the order to go and plow a bed for the Tisza, which in slow waves contentedly followed the path he made for it. Yet he need not suffer the gnawing hunger which was increased by the tantalizing sight of more and more luscious thistles. The donkey decided he would in passing just nibble at the delicacy. So he need not stop, yet would get his fill.

At first everything went all right. The donkey tore bits of the thistles as he passed them. But the more he ate the greedier he grew. It is true, he did not stop even then. But, as he plowed steadily, munching the sweet bits of thistles he had snatched in passing, the prickly delicacy tickled his

palate and he could hardly control his desire for a full meal.

In his misery the donkey's eyes roved round. Above the vast mass of thistles some plants rose up conspicuously. In his feverish hunger the donkey thought those particularly outstanding thistles invited him with special hospitality. And again a great thought flashed through the donkey's mind. "Well, I have been ordered to go and plow a bed for the Tisza. But I have not been told that the furrow must be one straight line." The donkey laughed out loud with relief as he realized that he could choose the best bits of the most appetizing thistles yet need not disobey his orders.

By the way, it is recorded that this was one of the rare occasions in the history of donkeys when one of their race ever laughed. It is said donkeys never laugh.

After a moment of reflection Karád *bácsi* said: "I'm sure I never saw one laugh. Did any one of you boys ever see a donkey laugh?"

The young fishermen speculated for a moment. "No, I never saw a donkey laugh," said one after the other. "Oh, please, Karád *bácsi*, go on with the story," asked the lad who had sprinkled the salt in the paprika-fish. He was the youngest of the group and therefore the most impatient. He did not like interruptions when stories were told. He wanted to know the end. Fisherman Karád was a wise old man. He immediately took up the threads of the story again.

Well, this donkey laughed on that occasion, and when he had laughed enough, he stepped to the side from which the

most appetizing thistle nodded to him. The plow jerked sideways, and the surprised Tisza nearly lost its wits from the shock. For a hundredth of a second the startled river stopped. Then it gathered its water to follow the turn to the right. The furrow had changed direction. The donkey nibbled and munched with great delight. Glancing around in every direction, he espied a plant daintier than any he had seen since he started to plough the bed for the Tisza. He rushed at it, and the golden plow followed with a jerk. So violent was the unexpected move that this time the poor Tisza almost lost its mind. Having left its straight course and hardly started to flow toward the right it was now compelled to pour its waters into the furrows running toward the left side. That was no easy job for a young river, and highly unpleasant. The fish in its water nearly swam into the dry ground, so sudden was the jerk to another direction.

But the donkey did not care for the trouble he caused to the poor river and the fish. He continued to change the course every time he saw on one side or the other a thistle that looked to him more desirable than those in front of him. And if the golden plow had not been so well built it would have gone to pieces long before the bed for the Tisza was finished. It was a trying task for the poor fishes to make their changes. With infinite care the good river managed to avoid overflow into surrounding fields. The fish too had learned to watch out for the curly changes in the river's course, so that not even one fish was lost in dry ground.

At last the river Duna came in sight. The donkey

smacked its lips and with a final dash reached the big river to which he had been ordered to plow the way.

With all its waves slowed in exhaustion, yet happy at reaching its destination, the Tisza tumbled into the Danube and has been pouring its waters into it ever since.

So do not blame our Tisza for its zig-zags; they are all the fault of the greedy donkey that plowed its zig-zag path.

“Oh, I wouldn’t dream of ever reproaching our Tisza for anything. It is the most perfect river on earth,” said the young fisherman at whose special request Karád *bácsi* had told the story. “But thank you for the good tale.”

The bottle of wine went round; so did the tobacco pouch. For a while the fishermen sat puffing mighty clouds of smoke from their clay pipes. They sipped of the light white wine and quietly waited for the next story. But Karád *bácsi* was not willing to go on.

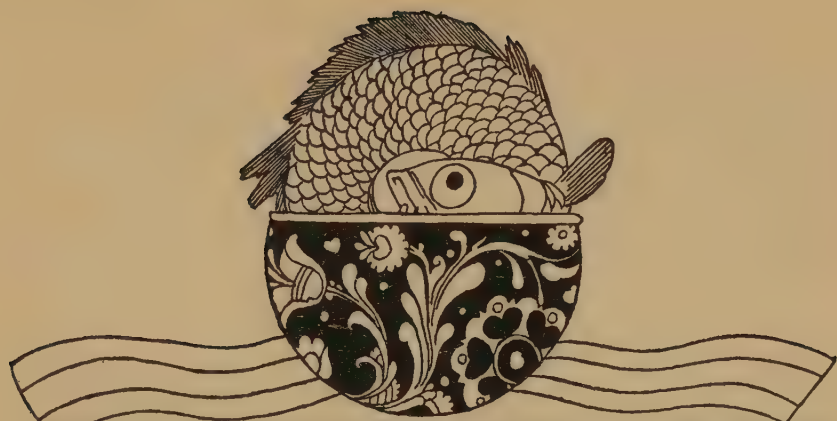
“Now one of you boys must tell us the next story,” he said.

“But, Karád *bácsi*, none of us can match you. Please do tell us another,” pleaded the young men.

The old fisherman, however, had eaten so much of the paprika-fish that he felt too lazy for another story.

He didn’t budge. The young men had to do their bit.

“Now, Jóska, go ahead,” said Karád *bácsi*, and Jóska did go ahead. He took a long draft from his glass, puffed once or twice at his clay pipe, cleared his throat, stroked his dashing little brown mustache, and, thus well prepared, he told the story of “The Fisherman and the Goldfish.”



The Fisherman and the Goldfish

ONE of our kings who lived in that beautiful castle in Buda, which I should love so much to see, once came home from a foreign journey. On that journey he had seen for the first time in his life a goldfish.

“How my daughter Erzsébet would love such a little goldfish!” was the King’s first thought. He was a good father, and Princess Erzsébet was his only child. He adored his daughter and was always anxious to do everything to please the young princess. So he resolved to take a goldfish home for her to play with.

Princess Erzsébet was enchanted with the new plaything. She had many pets: cats, dogs, canaries, peacocks, white mice, and rabbits. She had a cockatoo and a raven, and she loved them all, but now she loved the goldfish more than all her other pets.

When the King saw how delighted his daughter was with the present he had brought her from his foreign journey, he was anxious to make the little goldfish comfortable and safe. He ordered a crystal-lined fish pond to be built on the island of Marguerite, which nestled in the midst of the Danube, hardly a stone's throw from the royal castle.

The goldfish swam merrily in its luxurious pond lined with crystal, and the Princess crossed the Danube every day to watch her pet. She fed the little goldfish with crumbs of the whitest bread of the royal household, and soon it became so tame that it ate out of the hand of the Princess.

But one day a great disaster occurred. The Danube swelled and mounted. It mounted until it overflowed its banks and was so high that the island of Marguerite disappeared under the flood. Worst of all, the goldfish's crystal-lined pond was buried under the flood, and the current swept the little fish away in its tearing course.

Princess Erzsébet was heartbroken. While the people of Buda lamented the inundation of their homes, the Princess cared for nothing but the loss of her goldfish. She was so desperate that she would not play with any of her other pets. The cats and dogs and canaries, the peacock and white mice and rabbits and the cockatoo and the raven played their cleverest tricks, but Princess Erzsébet did not care. She ignored them completely. She pouted, she cried, she refused to eat and she did not sleep. She finally grew so pale that the desperate father asked the court physician what to do.

The court physician was an old man with a long beard and huge spectacles. He was a nice old man and very learned. The King told him that the Princess Erzsébet pouted and cried, refused to eat, and had not slept since her goldfish was lost. The court physician shook his head gravely.

"That is very bad, Your Majesty, very bad indeed," he said to the alarmed King.

"And has Her Royal Highness, the Princess, shown any other disturbing symptoms?" he asked.

"Well, let me see," said the King pensively. He lifted his crown a little to scratch his head more comfortably in meditation, and after a while said:

"Well, she kicked her governess in the shin, and—but that must not entirely be ascribed to the loss of her goldfish—she does occasionally kick her governess playfully in the shin, the dear child. Well, anyway, what do you think we'd better do?"

"First, I must see Her Royal Highness's royal tongue, and then I must take her royal temperature. After that, Your Majesty, I will be able to prescribe a treatment that will restore Princess Erzsébet's interest in her pets, stop her pouting and crying, and induce her to eat and sleep.

"Come on," said the King informally. He put his crown a tiny bit to one side, indicating that he was in a more hopeful mood, and led the court physician to Princess Erzsébet's royal apartment.

"Well, Whiskers, what do you want?" was the patient's ungracious greeting to the court physician.

The old doctor knew he must not be offended by anything naughty the Princess said or did. With a smirk that was partly hidden in the bushes of his long beard he coaxed the Princess to show her tongue.

Well, she showed him more than he wanted to see. She showed all of it, at least as much as she could stick out, and though it was a tongue of pretty red color the court physician was not satisfied with it. He shook his head gravely at the sight.

"I want my goldfish," shrieked the royal child before the court physician found time to proceed with his examination.

"Hush, hush, darling," pleaded the poor King, "don't get excited. The good old doctor will help you to get well."

"I am well enough, but I want my goldfish," yelled the Princess.

"Yes, yes, Your Royal Highness, you——"

"Shut up, old Whiskers, and get out," cried Erzsébet at the top of her voice. And to make her demands more emphatic she stamped with her feet. With both of them.

"Now, now, come, darling, be a dear little Princess," implored the desperate father. Let the good doctor take your temperature and then he will prescribe what to do."

"I want my goldfish," shrilled the little girl. "I don't want to be a dear little princess, I want my goldfish. My da-a-arling goldfish." She stamped a good deal more with her feet, with both of them, then kicked the court physician in the shin, thumbed her nose at the nurse, scowled at the governess who had stood by during the whole time wringing

her hands and rolling her eyes to heaven, and then flung herself at the neck of her father.

"Daddy," she sobbed, "send horrible old Whiskers away. Get me my goldfish, my d-a-a-arling goldfish."

The crown slipped quite to the back of the King's head when his daughter flung herself at his neck. He was at his wits' end. He saw there was nothing left but to recover the goldfish.

The King announced that he who found the goldfish would be covered with all the honors in his power to bestow, and receive furthermore a whole village as a present from the King.

Every man and woman in Hungary who lived on the bank of a river gave up all other work and started to fish and to angle for Princess Erzsébet's goldfish. Even the children stopped playing games and searched for the Princess's goldfish. And the children even shunned school to devote themselves entirely to the effort of finding the goldfish.

But it is an impossible task to find one little fish in the vast waters flowing through the great land of Hungary. People gave up and by and by returned to their daily work.

On the bank of the beloved Tisza there was a little fisher-hut in which an old fisherman lived with his son.

The old man had been head of the fisher colony at one time, and the respected head of it. But bit by bit he had given up more and more of his work. He now left it to his son to examine the water and to judge from the direction in

which mosquitoes and other bugs flew where and when to spread the nets.

His son was very clever at the job, and on his way to take his father's place in the fisher colony on the Tisza. He spread the nets and directed the marketing of the catch of the whole fishing colony.

The old fisherman didn't do a thing any more. He sat around in the sun, whittled willow branches into flutes for the children, and told stories about the wars in which he had fought. Sometimes truthfully, sometimes not entirely so. He smoked all day long, sucking mightily at his long-stemmed pipe with the yellow tassels.

The old man was a master at spitting at distances no other pipe smoker of that neighborhood could outdistance.

One day his son went with the catch to the near-by town to market. When he returned he was a changed man. He was not himself.

The young fisherman would spread out the nets and forget to draw them in. Soon he even forgot to spread them out. He began to shrink and pale and passed his nights sleeplessly.

"Well, my son, what is the matter?" drawled the old fisherman.

"Nothing, Father."

In vain did the old fisherman try to find out what the matter was. His son kept silent. The trouble about which the son would not speak to his father was that the young man had fallen in love with a young lady in town, whose

rich mother would not permit her to marry the young fisherman, though the young lady loved him dearly.

"My daughter must marry a man of wealth and title," said the rich mother. "You have neither money nor title, you had better keep away from my daughter."

One day, to shame his daydreaming idle son, the father took the fishing net and shuffled with it to the Tisza. He sank the net. When he drew it out he found in the catch the Princess Erzsébet's little goldfish caught in the meshes.

The old man remembered the price set on the goldfish and started home with it at a pace as if his bones had become young again.

"Well, Son," he said, "here is our chance! I will go myself to Buda with the fish. I shall present it myself to the King. I always have wanted to see the royal castle, and His Majesty, our gracious King. And I always wanted to see the Duna which flows at the foot of the royal palace. I wonder whether it is true that it is a greater river than our own Tisza."

"Well, Father, I might be going with you," said his son.

"You are welcome. Let's go!"

When the old fisherman and his son handed the goldfish to the King, the overjoyed father embraced first the old and then the young man. He kissed them each twice, first on the left cheek and then on the right. And he kissed them so heartily that the smacks resounded all over the royal court.

Princess Erzsébet too embraced and kissed the two men,

and she was so happy that she did not kick anyone in the shin for fully twenty-four hours. The royal household sighed with relief. It was a great day for everyone.

The King kept his word and rewarded the old fisherman with treasures and property and made him a knight. The property was a village through which the Tisza was flowing. With the title went a coat of arms. The King ordered two goldfish on a blue ground for the coat of arms of the new nobleman. And he endowed him with the name of Halász. So while formerly he was a *halász*, a fisherman he now was called Halász.

After a glorious time as guests of the King the two men returned home. The young man proudly appeared before the mother of his sweetheart, and she had no excuse for refusing her daughter to him.

The young people married and lived happily ever after. The old man, though rich and titled, loved to sit in front of his palace, as he used to sit on the *padka* in front of his fisherhut. He spent his days telling people of his glorious visit to Buda. He showed them how the King had embraced him, how he had patted his shoulders, and other memorable things. Boys being told the story of "The Fisherman and the Goldfish" often dream of angling goldfish out of the Tisza.

"Now, that's one of the finest stories I ever heard," said the youngest of Karád *bácsi*'s fishing family.

"I guess it's because you are so young and haven't heard many stories in your life," said Karád dryly.



PRINCESS ERZSÉBET KISSED THE TWO MEN

"Now, really, it is a good story," said the young fisherman who had put the onions into the kettle. "I must say I would have liked to box the ears of that little plague who kicked everybody in the shins. Infernal little creature! Princess though she may have been." And he kept murmuring to himself: "The little pest!" and other unflattering exclamations.

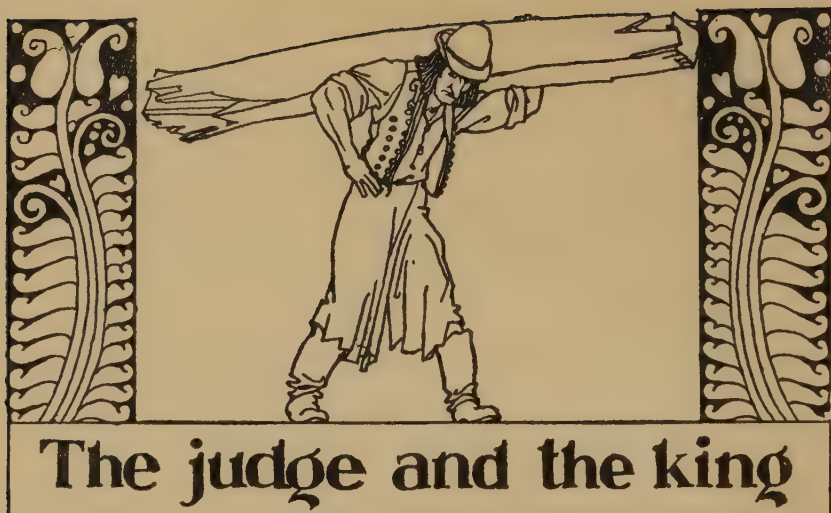
He stroked his own shin sympathetically as if Princess Erzsébet had just given him a painful kick.

"Now, my boy, don't go on like that! It was only a story," said wise old Karád, calming the excited youngster. He got up and went to the little window. Peering at the starlit sky the old fisherman said:

"*Hé*, boys, I think it is time to turn in, we must get up early with our nets, you know!"

"Oh, no, no!" protested all the others. "Let's have at least one more story before we go to bed. *Három a magyar* (Three for the Magyar), you know, Karád *bácsi*, and we had only two stories to-night."

Karád *bácsi* gave in, knowing that was the best way to save time. "Well, have your will. And he told them about "The Judge and the King."



KING MATHIAS the Righteous was once again in a mood that often took hold of him. The mood to step down from the chilly heights of the throne and to mingle on a level plane with the people.

This time he walked the streets of his beloved Kolozsvár, every nook and corner of which is to this day filled with the memory of Hungary's greatest king.

Clad in shabby garments, Mathias wandered around in the city, watching the life of the peasants who brought milk and eggs and fruit and vegetables and flowers and many other things to the market.

Mathias was a keen observer and took mental notes of many things that occurred to him as worth while to remember. He would stop occasionally to exchange greetings with poor people who did not guess what an exalted personage it

was that shook hands with them and inquired about their lives at home.

As he walked through the streets and over the market Mathias felt tired and hungry. So he sat down at a little open market hut where the peasants buy cups of coffee and warm their hands on them before they warm the insides of their stomachs with the hot liquid.

Mathias ordered a cup of coffee, and as he sipped it he kept his eye on the scene in front of him. Opposite to the hut was the Judge's house. The Judge had the reputation of abusing poor people. He made them work for his private use and never paid for their labor.

This morning the Judge was just about to have wood carried into his yard. To save paying for the job he ordered the *pandurs* to bring poor people from the market to carry the wood into his house.

One of the *pandurs* saw Mathias idly sipping his coffee. He stepped up to him and said:

"*Hé!* you long-nosed fellow, get busy. Come and carry wood for the Judge."

"What are you paying?" asked the King.

"That!" said the *pandur* and struck Mathias hard with his stick. Then he drove him with the others to the Judge's house.

The Judge was leaning on his elbows on the windowsill with a long-stemmed pipe dangling from his mouth as he watched the *pandur* drive the poor people to his house.

When Mathias came near the window where the Judge

looked out, he asked: "What do you pay me if I am carrying wood for you?"

"Exactly what I am paying the others," said the Judge. When he saw that Mathias was about to say something he added: "You'd better stop talking and hurry along with the others or you get extra pay—some blue streaks on your back."

Mathias did not say a word and went to carry wood with the rest of the poor people. He carried the logs from the street into the yard. Secretly he wrote his name on three logs at the bottom of the pile.

The same day he left Kolozsvár. But three days later he returned to his beloved city. This time it was not a shabby citizen, but His Royal Majesty who came for a visit. He came in all his splendor, with a great retinue, every one clad in the pomp of court garments.

Mathias received deputations and individuals and finally asked for the Judge and the town council.

The Judge appeared, all humble servitude and smirking respect.

"How is the city?" Mathias asked.

"Oh, it is as thriving and prosperous as one can wish," the Judge said.

"And have the poor people any complaints?" asked Mathias.

"Oh, none whatsoever," said the Judge. "Under Your Majesty's gracious reign everyone is happy and nobody has any complaints."

"Is that so?" said Mathias with an ominous tinge to his voice. "Have the poor people no complaints?" he repeated.

"None whatsoever, I assure Your Gracious Majesty," answered the Judge again.

"Well," said Mathias to his servants, "go to the house of the Judge and search the pile of wood for three logs bearing my name. Bring those logs and bring also the Judge's *pandurs* along."

The King's servants went to the house of the Judge. They searched the wood piles for the logs with the King's signature. As soon as they found the marked logs they returned to the King, bringing the Judge's *pandurs* with them.

When they arrived Mathias thundered at the Judge: "Who carried this wood for you?"

"The poor people of the city," stammered the Judge, pale and trembling.

"And what did you pay for the hauling?"

"Er—er—er—nothing," answered the Judge.

"Nothing?" said the King, lifting his voice so that it could be heard beyond the walls of his palace. "Nothing? You paid worse than nothing. You paid by striking those who resented your infernal meanness."

"*Hé*, you there," the King said, picking out among the Judge's *pandurs* the one who had struck him.

"*Hé*, do you remember my long nose? My back is still smarting from the blow you struck, you scoundrel."

"And you, my good Judge, who find everything so

pleasant for the poor people, who think they have nothing to complain of, do you remember your answer to me?"

The Judge did not reply. He could not. His teeth chattered, his knees trembled, and everything was black before his eyes.

"You don't seem to remember. Short memory, very short memory," said the King with biting irony.

"Well, I will refresh your memory, I will," said the King.

Then he turned to his retinue and to the others who filled the hall and related how it all happened.

"Look at that trembling coward," he said, pointing to the Judge. "When I asked how much he would pay me if I carried wood for him he said: 'As much as the others!' And when I was about to ask another question he stopped me, threatening: 'You'd better stop talking and hurry along with the others or you get extra pay—some blue streaks on your back.'"

"Do you remember your answer now?"

The Judge stammered an inaudible "Yes."

"This man is not fit to hold office," said the King. "He must never be placed in a position of power. He has misused the power vested in him. Instead of serving the people he made them serve him. He must never hold office again."

Then the King turned to the *pandurs* and said: "And you, poor fools, learn to be men even if you are servants. If you are ordered to do an injustice, resent it. Don't sell your souls. Don't harass poor people because a hard and cruel man wishes to make you the tool of his wickedness!"

The people of Kolozsvár soon learned of the King's speech. And when Mathias left the city to return to his residence in Buda, the streets were lined with poor people who shouted themselves hoarse: "*Éljen Mathias, éljen!* Long live Mathias, long may he live!"

Few kings were ever cheered as sincerely as was Mathias on this occasion.

"And now, good-night, boys," said Karád *bácsi* in the same breath, not leaving his young partners time to start any more talking.

He got up, stretched himself, and yawned. Then he knocked the cold tobacco out of his pipe and repeated: "Good-night! And everybody up in time!"

The stars twinkled above the hut where the fishermen were soon sound asleep. The ripple of the slow-flowing Tisza, the chirping of the crickets, and the croaking of the frogs were here and there drowned in a rumbling noise.

Karád *bácsi* was snoring.



Chasing the rainbow

THE village under the acacia trees lay silent in brooding heat. No noise stirred the motionless air. The men and the women, the lads and the young girls were all away working in the fields, and the sun shot its rays so scorchingly onto the thatched roofs of the village that the few men and women, too old for the work in the fields, and the babies and infants left at home in their care, were dozing most of the time. They hardly stirred except for a draft of water from the slender brown earthen jugs that kept the villagers' water cool. Flies buzzed over the faces and uncovered limbs of the dozing infants. Dogs, cats, chickens, and roosters, even the rats and mice of the village were op-

pressed by the heat into fitful naps. The very village itself would have seemed asleep if a handful of boys had not given it a touch of life.

The urchins, stripped almost to the skin, romped as noisily in the deep dust of the wide main street as if the sun had no power over them. With their bare toes they raced over the gritty, gray, dry dust, kicking it so that it flew up in clouds. They chased each other, jumped, and somersaulted. And when they were completely covered with dust so that their own mothers could not have distinguished one from the other they rushed to the pond at the end of the village. There they shed their last garments and threw themselves into the shallow water.

Boys have imagination; therefore the tepid water seemed refreshing to them. But they were soon tired of wallowing in the muddy, shallow pond and jumped out of the water again to try out other pleasures.

"*Hé*, boys," shouted Pista, "let's go to the mulberries." He pulled on his skirtlike wide linen trousers and fastened the trouser cords to his glistening brown waist, while he ran toward the mulberry trees. The other boys too grabbed their *gatyas* and raced their comrade to the side street, which was lined on both sides with mulberry trees. Ripe, luscious black mulberries hung invitingly from some of the trees, others bore the plain white fruit. But while the white mulberry is much sweeter than its dark brother, boys don't bother about the pale fruit. The black mulberry is the real thing. The ripe fruit drops from the tree if you merely look at it.

And it makes a lovely splotch on the ground; blue-black stains on your shirt and white *gatyá* and on your hands. It stains your lips and your cheeks to a most enjoyable and long-lasting dirtiness.

"I wish we had some girls around to pelt them with a handful of mulberries," said Jani from a branch of the tree, which he had been the first to reach.

"I wish Maris were here. I would throw them right into her white face," said Gyuri, raising his handful of mulberries and aiming at an imaginary victim.

"I would throw them down Juli's neck," said Peti. "How she would scream, and how she would scratch my eyes out! It would be fun."

"I'm glad no girl is around," said Feri gruffly. "I can't stand their silliness."

"Be careful, you stain my dress," he imitated girls with a shrill voice very contemptuously.

The boys were filling themselves and getting dirtier and dirtier with the honorable stains of overripe black mulberries. So absorbed were they with their fascinating occupation that the cloudlets which had been sailing for a while in the high blue sky gathered into clouds without being noticed by the urchins.

A sudden gust of wind shook a shower of the tender-stemmed ripe mulberries over the boys. Some distance away a lone boy had been sleeping under a white mulberry tree unnoticed by the playmates. Pali had not been with them when they jumped in the dust and wallowed in the pond.

The blast of wind pelting him with the ripe white mulberries awoke the boy. Rubbing the sleep out of his eyes he started toward the noisy group of boys.

"*Hé*, there comes Blue Eyes!" shouted Gyuri.

"Well, well, Blue Eyes, did you——" But Gyuri could not finish the sentence. Another gust of wind shook the trees so that the leaves and little twigs came down in a shower. The wind caught the boys in the back and puffed their *gatyas* into sails that tugged at them.

Pali rushed toward the group and had hardly reached it when an ear-splitting thunderclap lashed them into a compact unit. They caught hold of each other. Jancsi, Peti, Andris, Feri, Józsi, and the rest of them clung together in a solid mass of frightened boyhood. A terrific thunderstorm broke loose. Bolts zigzagged down the dark sky, and deafening crashes followed blinding flashes. Storm-driven black clouds emptied torrents of water in streams over the village.

The boys clung breathless to each other until the rage of the storm had spent itself. By and by they found their voices again and were about to start research in the Main Street where the torrent of rain had turned the dust into mud, most fascinating to every real boy, when Gyuri shouted:

"*Hé*, boys, look at that rainbow!"

"Why, there's another one," added Feri, discovering the pale twin of the brilliant rainbow that spanned the horizon.

After a mere glance at the colorful phenomenon the

boys started toward Main Street. Only Pali remained motionless. He gazed with yearning eyes at the rainbow, oblivious of the other boys.

"Pali, aren't you coming with us to play in the mud?" shouted Andris back to the boy.

"Oh, leave Blue-Eyes alone," yelled Peti scornfully. "You know he cares more for the sky than for the loveliest mud."

There was something peculiar about Pali. He was different from the other boys in many ways. For one thing, he was the only blue-eyed boy in the village. His hair was all right. It was as brown as the dark heads of the other boys; but his blue eyes were provoking and earned him the nickname Blue-Eyes. And then, he liked to read. The other boys, too, liked a story, but they preferred to listen to one than to read it. And while Pali would never fail to join the crowd listening to the village's master story-teller, listening raptly to hundred-times retold stories of the old man, he would just as gladly sit on the bench in front of his parents' house with a book and pick the stories out for himself.

Gazing now at the rainbow the lone boy thought:

"What a beautiful bridge! It must be a heavenly bridge. Angels are perhaps walking on it. How I should love to walk over it myself. Why shouldn't I try? I am sure the angels wouldn't mind."

"I think I will try," the boy thought. "It isn't far away, hardly a little beyond the woods. I can surely reach it and return by evening. Crossing the rainbow from one end to the

other I may get a glimpse of heaven. How wonderful it would be to peep a little into heaven!"

And Pali started running toward the wood beyond which he thought to find the bridge to heaven. He ran as fast as his legs would carry him.

The thunderstorm had interrupted the work in the fields, and the villagers returned home. Pali's mother caught sight of her son running toward the woods. She called after him, asking him to return. But he did not hear his mother's call.

As he ran the flowers beckoned to him: "Come, child, sit down among us." The birds invited him to listen to their song. But Pali sped on.

The soaked earth was slippery, and he lost his footing more than once. The thorns hooked into his shirt, asking him where he was running to. A brooklet threw itself into his path to stop his flight. Yet Pali ran on toward the heavenly bridge. With eyes fastened to the rainbow he ignored the flowers and birds, waded through the brooklet, got up and ran on every time he slipped on the wet ground. On he sped, gazing all the time at the rainbow.

In his run he met an old peasant who asked him kindly: "Where are you running, and why in such breathless haste, my boy?"

"*Jaj*," answered Pali, without stopping to look at the old man. "I must hurry to that bridge and I must be back by evening."

"Foolish child," answered the old man. "Where do you see a bridge? There is a rainbow but not a bridge," he said,

shrugging his shoulders at the boy, who, deaf to his words, had long passed him. The old man muttered to himself: "Well, let him run if he doesn't believe me, an experienced old man."

And, running on, the boy thought: "Is it a bridge? Is it a rainbow? I must go on—to find out for myself, to be sure what it really is."

And Pali followed the path in the forest with his eyes fastened to the shining vision in the sky. The night advanced toward the boy, and he imagined he heard sighs and laughter. His cap was brushed from his head by invisible hands; he stumbled over tree trunks, yet ran forward, always toward the rainbow beckoning to him between the branches.

In his breathless course, Pali encountered a religious procession. Men and women marched chanting sacred songs and waving holy banners. At the sight of the boy, the leader of the procession stopped.

"Where are you going, sonny?" he said to Pali. And when he heard the answer he mildly warned him: "Don't take the trouble! Don't be a fool! No man can reach the rainbow. And what may a rainbow be anyhow? There are many stories about it, but none of us—and you see we are a good many—has ever seen it from near by."

"But I must go to see it," retorted Pali obstinately, and rushed onward, climbing the pathless slope of a mountain.

Stones cut his bare feet, he stumbled over rocks, yet did not rest before he reached the summit.



"THERE IS A RAINBOW BUT NOT A BRIDGE"

Evening was swiftly approaching, and the exhausted boy dropped to the ground. His eyes looked longingly at the rainbow, whose brilliant colors were fading into the pale night.

"Beautiful bridge, beautiful rainbow, whichever you are," he implored, "don't leave me, don't! Stay with me! If I can't walk over you like the angels, let me at least gaze at you until I die," he whispered with fainting voice.

An old recluse at the summit heard the supplication and went to see the boy. He was a very old man, stooped, with long white hair and a white beard that reached to his belt.

The old man gently raised the boy and asked: "Why do you want to die? You are far too young for that. There is much ahead of you to live for. Come, come, sonny, let me take care of you."

Pali followed the kind old recluse into his hut, his heart filled with yearning for the rainbow that had entirely faded from the sky.

The wise old man tried to comfort the exhausted youngster, feeding him with milk and bread, broth and fruit.

"Your desires have drawn you toward unattainable provinces," he said to the boy. "You were running after a mirage appearing on the horizon when the sky is laughing with one eye and crying with the other."

And while Pali rested, the wise old man explained to him some of the wonders of Nature. He unlocked the door to some of Mother Nature's secrets. Exhausted as he was, Pali listened spellbound. What the old hermit told him was a thousand times more interesting than the most fascinating

tales of the village's master story-teller. But by and by Pali's eyes closed and the old hermit put him gently to bed. In the morning the old man took Pali home to his parents, who had been distracted by the disappearance of their son.

The whole village rejoiced in the return of Blue-Eyes, because, in spite of nicknames and much teasing, everyone liked the little dreamer, and all were glad to see him after his strange disappearance in quest of the heavenly bridge.

But Pali remained sad for a long while. He had set his heart so strongly on walking over the rainbow and peeping into heaven that the disappointment lasted quite a while. By and by, however, he forgot his blighted hope and thought more and more of the fascinating things the old hermit had told him about the sky, the clouds, the winds, the streams, the sun, and the moon.

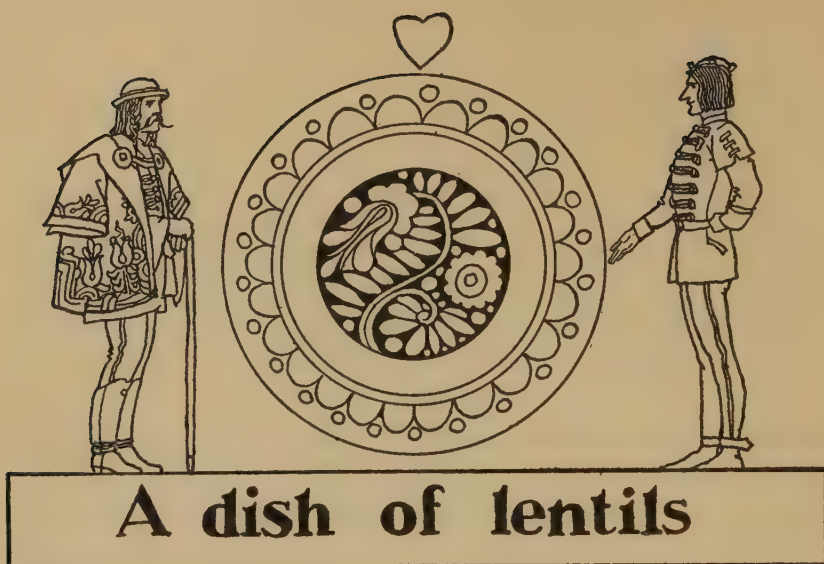
Many years passed, and Peti, Jani, Gyuri, and the other boys who had clung together in the storm took over from their elders the tilling of the fields. Their parents were now watching the infants on hot summer days when the harvest called the villagers away.

Only one of their former crowd was missing. Pali! But he was not lost, as he had been once when he chased the rainbow. Pali's eyes were still searching the sky. But not in dumb yearning. He scanned the sky from his laboratory, through huge and mysterious instruments. He knew now that the rainbow was merely a beautiful phenomenon in the sky and not a bridge connecting heaven with earth. But this knowledge did not make him sad. He had learned to read in the

book of Nature and found as much fascination in it as in the daydreams of his boyhood. From the time that the old hermit let him have a glimpse into Nature's wonders his desire for knowledge had led him on and on, disregarding scorn, difficulties, adverse advice, as he had ignored it when with bleeding feet he chased the rainbow to the summit of the mountain, where the wise old man had taken care of him.

Pali's name became a shining star in the world of science, which proudly claimed Blue-Eyes as its own.

Ever since then Hungarian boys who go too far in teasing one of their crowd because he is "different" may hear someone mention Pali, who, long ago, as Blue-Eyes, chased the shining rainbow.



FARMER VENETUR sat one day at his dish of lentils when a stranger stopped at his door and asked for hospitality.

“God grant you a good day,” the stranger greeted Venetur. He was a good-looking young man, all covered with dust but in high good spirits.

“May God grant the same to you!” said the host. “Come in, make yourself at home. Take a rest if you are tired, sit down at my table if you are hungry.”

“You don’t ask who I am,” said the young stranger.

“What do I care?” answered Venetur. “All I need to know is whether you are tired or hungry!”

“I am both tired and hungry,” said the stranger, obvi-

ously pleased with the farmer's open-hearted hospitality.

"Help yourself, my lad," said Venetur, handing the dish of lentils to his young guest.

But before the stranger could reach for the dish the host said: "Wait a moment, my friend. There is one thing I do want to know. Where are you at home?"

"In Buda."

"So! Well, in your part of the country people fertilize the soil that it may yield more. For us here, plain soil is good enough. Wait a moment, I will go into the kitchen and fertilize these lentils."

The farmer took the dish into the kitchen and put a generous portion of lard on the vegetable. Then he cut some smoked sausages from the string hanging in the meat-smoking chimney. He fertilized the modest dish with the delicious sausages and returned with the improved fare to his guest.

They both fell to the lentils and the sausages and ate so much that they hardly could breathe after the meal.

Venetur had put such a generous portion of lard in the lentils that both he and the stranger felt a desire for a glass of wine. The farmer was very poor and had no credit at the inn, nor had he money at home. He went out into the kitchen and told his servant to take his Sunday jacket to the inn and leave it there as security for the wine.

The stranger saw through the window the servant leaving the house with a jug in one hand and the farmer's jacket in the other. And he also observed the servant returning with

the jug of wine but without the jacket. With their wine the two men sat for hours chatting and exchanging views on many things. The stranger naturally felt grateful for the generous hospitality, and when he left, he invited his host to come and visit him in Buda. Venetur shook his hand cordially and promised to visit him.

"And where may you be living, my friend, and for whom shall I ask?" he inquired.

"I live in the royal castle. I am chancery clerk of the King. Just ask for Chancery Clerk Paul."

Farmer Venetur remembered his promise, and a few weeks after their meal of lentils started to visit his friend in Buda. It was a long way from the Széklerland, where Venetur lived, to Buda, the capital of the country, but Venetur arrived in good health and joyous anticipation of renewing his friendship with the young chancery clerk.

The guard at the gate of the royal palace seemed to know the clerk, because, when Venetur asked for Paul, the chancery clerk, the guard immediately knew whom he meant.

Venetur was very pleased. "My friend must be a popular fellow that even the guard knows him."

They escorted Venetur through many, many beautiful rooms of the gorgeous palace, until, at last, they found Paul.

"Well, my friend, here I am," the farmer gayly exclaimed. "I am so glad to have found you."

The young chancery clerk shook his guest's hand with the



THE YOUNG CHANCERY CLERK SHOOK HIS GUEST'S HAND

greatest cordiality. There was no doubt he was exceedingly pleased to see Venetur.

When they settled in the comfortable chairs, the clerk said: "Let's have a chat first. After dinner I will show you the palace." And he besieged the farmer with questions, which showed that he had not forgotten the gossip he had picked up when he traveled in the Széklerland.

"How is everybody in Széklerland?" he asked. "What are the Apors doing? Has beautiful Ilona Dános already chosen a bridegroom? Has Squire Kolányi not drunk himself to death? Has Béla Latabár married his sweetheart? And are the Gerö boys still picking quarrels?"

Farmer Venetur answered all the questions and in between told other news of his home place.

In the midst of their animated conversation a liveried lackey opened the door and announced ceremoniously:

"Your Majesty, the dinner is served." Venetur looked around for "His Majesty," but the chancery clerk quickly led him through the door into the dining hall.

An array of noblemen, clad in the gorgeous state robes of the Hungarian aristocracy stood respectfully waiting. At the entrance of the clerk they bowed deeply.

"Well, my friend," exclaimed Farmer Venetur in sudden alarm, "what is all that?"

After a short embarrassed pause he continued: "You don't happen to be—you are not perchance the—h'm—the King?"

Chancery Clerk Paul laughed heartily. "Yes, perchance I do happen to be the King."

Venetur scratched his head. Then he extended his hand toward his host and said with a broad grin:

"Well, well, that is a good joke on me! You certainly fooled me, all right, my lad—er, Your Majesty!"

The King liked his friend for his equanimity. Mátyás liked people who did not fall on their knees before him and who treated him as he treated everyone else, as a human being.

He had Venetur sit at the place of honor on his right side and took care that his friend got the best morsels on his plate, and he ordered the king of wines, the fiery Tokay, to be served for his friend.

Farmer Venetur enjoyed his meal and did not make a secret of it.

"My, you have a good cook, my king!" he said to Mátyás. "I am sure he can cook a good dish of lentils."

King Mátyás laughed in happy remembrance of the lentils eaten at Venetur's hospitable table.

"You shall judge immediately yourself," said the King. "I ordered a special dish of lentils for you, my friend."

"No, no," protested Venetur. "I am sorry Your Majesty gave yourself the trouble of ordering a special dish for me. But I couldn't eat another bite right now. I have eaten and drunk—I couldn't eat any more—beg your pardon——"

King Mátyás secretly enjoyed Venetur's confusion. With a sly wink, he said:

"I bet you will eat of the dish of lentils prepared for you, and you alone. Nobody is to share it with you."

Perspiration broke out on Venetur's brow. But before he could renew his protest two servants entered with a huge and heavy dish which they set down in front of the horrified Székler farmer.

The King lifted the lid of the dish with his own hands, and lo! the lentils were brand new glittering yellow gold coins, fresh from the mint in Körmöcz.

Venetur stared at the gold and was about to say something, but the King was quicker:

"All that is yours, for the delicious lentils you so generously shared with me when I was merely a hungry stranger under your hospitable roof.

"And as you fertilized the dish you were frugally eating, with lard and smoked sausages for me, so I will fertilize these lentils for you."

With these words King Mátyás took out of his pocket a handful of gems and threw the precious stones on top of the pile of gold. The diamonds, pearls, emeralds, rubies, and sapphires glittered brilliantly and melted beautifully with the shining gold.

Venetur gasped and tried again to say something, but King Mátyás had not yet finished his own speech.

"I owe you one more thing," he said to Venetur. "I must repay you for the Sunday jacket you pawned at the inn to procure a glass of wine for me.

The King unclasped his own gorgeous mantle of purple

brocade and hung it over Venetur's shoulders. And turning to the courtiers he said: "You, too, hand your mantles to my friend Venetur!"

Off came the court robes of velvet, silk, and brocade with their wealth of jeweled clasps. Venetur nearly broke down under the load of his treasures, but King Mátyás ordered the lackeys to take care of them.

The King kept Farmer Venetur for a whole week as his guest and showed him personally all over the beautiful royal palace. He took long walks with him in the wonderful garden where they gazed together down on the quaint city of Buda and on the silvery stream of the Danube which flows majestically at the foot of the royal castle of the Hungarian kings.

King and farmer equally enjoyed the visit and promised to see each other in the future again. The courtiers were a little displeased because they had had to give Venetur their costly garments. But the King did not care, because courtiers are apt to be displeased for one reason or the other. He even laughed when he heard that after Venetur's visit the courtiers kept saying to each other that it was dangerous to dress up for the King, who at any time might order you to give up your robe to a mere farmer, only because he had fed and sheltered the King without asking who he was.

Venetur carried his treasures home and used the gold to build a castle in which he lived happily ever after.



I

THERE was once a little village in the district of Nyir, or maybe in Erdöhát—or was it in another part of Hungary? Well, I don't remember exactly where it was, but, never mind, the village was somewhere in Hungary. In that village there lived an old woman. She was a widow and had an only son, and that son was just good for nothing.

He didn't like to work. Positively not. In summer he would while away the time catching flies. In winter he spent his days lingering around the logs near the fireplace.

His mother scolded him for his laziness and tried to spur him to work, but Matyi didn't budge. The good old woman's

words didn't affect him more than if she had thrown handfuls of dried peas at a dry wall. For a long time he lived such a lazy, idle life.

But all at once he got tired of loafing. Life became so dull that the days seemed to stretch endlessly. Matyi became restless, and he, who hardly ever went beyond his mother's estate, now strolled out to the hill at the end of the village.

There the loafers of the village used to assemble toward evening to wag their tongues in idle talk. At the unusual sight of Matyi, the lads of his own age broke out into surprised and jeering laughter as he approached them. From the top of the hill Matyi looked around, and for the first time in his life he saw mountains swell into the sky on the rim of the horizon. He also saw the spires of remote villages stick out like lances. And from the chatter of the other young men he learned that there were other countries besides their own. And he heard that in one of the neighboring districts, next week there was to be a fair—the famous fair of Döbrög.

An intense desire welled up in Matyi to see the country. Thoughts started whirling in his brain, an activity utterly strange to our lazy friend. But the thoughts, once started, whirled around in his brain like the wheel of a throbbing mill. Yes, now that he had begun to think he could not stop thinking.

While he turned in his mind what he could do, it struck him that his mother had a flock of geese. Lovely young white geese with tender flesh and snowy down under their wings. They had been early hatched and carefully raised by

the old widow. She hoped to get a good price for them if she took them to market before the other breeders offered geese.

Matyi set his heart on getting those geese from his mother. The old woman was dumbfounded when Matyi implored her to trust him with the geese; to let him try his luck with them.

"Are you crazy?" she said furiously. "I knew you were lazy, but I didn't know you were crazy," she hurled at her son. But Matyi was not willing to take a denial.

"Now, Mother," Matyi persisted, "do let me have your flock of geese! I shall take them to the market and try to sell them to your greatest advantage. Maybe I learn that way the trade of selling things."

"Selling, you loafer, you ne'er-do-well!" The old woman nearly choked with rage. "If you want to do something, better look after the chores at home."

"But, Mother——" Matyi tried to break in.

Disregarding the interruption the widow continued: "What did you do all summer long, you loafer, you molly-coddle, you—— Take a hand at the chores here. Selling geese at the market!" Fortunately for Matyi his mother was so exhausted with scolding him that she had to stop talking. That gave him a chance to press his request. And so determined was he to take the geese to the market that neither water nor fire could have erased the thought from his mind. He begged and begged so long that his mother finally gave in.

“Well, all right,” the widow said at last. “May you have your will, my son, and God bless you. But, Matyi,” she admonished him, “get really busy and be doing things, because idleness is a great sin.”

Matyi nearly jumped out of his skin with joy. As if he were not the same lad, he began to hustle to get ready for the great adventure.

First he selected a sturdy stick. Then he dug out from the corner behind the huge round earthen stove a cobwebbed old side-bag which his father had worn flung over his shoulder all his life.

Into this side-bag his mother put cheese, bacon, bread, salt, and garlic. While the old woman filled the bag Matyi went into the barnyard to pick out his flock of geese.

He shoved away the old geese and the ganders and caught the coveted twenty tender white goslings. Finally he took a well-strung goose-whip, and after saying good-bye to his mother started the flock toward the market, following it at a comfortable pace.

Yes, there was the famous Döbrög fair awaiting him. The market place was the property of the powerful Squire Döbrögi. The Squire was a haughty and arrogant man who thought even the King could not command him. His will was the law. And his pleasure the supreme rule in Döbrög. This self-appointed ruler of Döbrög took to himself the right to set the price for the wares of the peasants and artisans at the fair. And if the seller dared to ask more for his mer-

chandise Squire Döbrögi confiscated the goods and punished the vendor besides. But this was not all of his impudence: If anyone brought anything that the Squire desired, he simply took it away from the owner.

When people rebelled and asked the high-handed man how he could treat them like that, Squire Döbrögi haughtily explained that he had won Döbrög by deed of arms. "The conqueror is beyond the rules and laws of the ordinary people," he would tell them.

When our Matyi arrived at the fair Squire Döbrögi was just promenading on his way. Döbrögi's greedy eyes quickly espied the twenty lovely geese. The easier, as everyone on the market took off his hat to the Squire, and Matyi was the only one who did not uncover his head. Squire Döbrögi asked Matyi: "Who is the owner of the geese?"

"None but myself, if you have to know it," said Matyi flippantly.

"*Ejnye*, you scoundrel! Don't you know who is master here? I will teach you manners! How dare you keep your hat on in my presence? And what is the price of the geese?"

"Matyi defiantly pulled his hat deeper down on his head and answered: "Three *márjás* the pair of them."

"Will you let me have them for half the price?"

"Not to my own father's soul would I give them cheaper than at three *márjás* the pair of them," said Matyi very deliberately.

The Squire's face grew purple. Never such impudence!

At Döbrögi's angry signal three "Catch-'ims" rushed at Matyi and dragged him into the Squire's mansion. Others drove away his flock of geese.

In vain did Matyi try to free himself. The three Catch'ims, reinforced by other servants, held him fast over the threshold of the mansion. They thrashed him to the great satisfaction of Squire Döbrögi, who sat in a large leather-covered chair a servant had brought out to the scene of the thrashing. He counted personally the fifty strokes he had ordered.

When they released him at last, Matyi said ironically: "Thank you, sir, for your payment. If God gives me strength and I live long enough, I shall serve you as you deserve. But that you may not forget, better note it by notches on your entrance door: Ludas Matyi will thrice repay you for this."

Matyi had hardly finished his ironic little speech when some of the Squire's servants fell upon him again and covered his body with resounding whacks. They dragged him by his hair out of the court so that his toes didn't touch the ground.

But while they overpowered him he kept his spirit and defiantly shouted back: "And yet Ludas Matyi will serve you three times as you deserve!"

And outside of the Squire's mansion he told the assembled people: "You will see, I am going to beat him three times."

Everyone laughed at that boast, but most of all did the people of the Döbrög household laugh at the crazy words.



THEY DRAGGED HIM BY HIS HAIR OUT OF THE COURT

II

There was Matyi, beaten and without geese. He didn't care to return to his mother, whom he had promised to sell her treasured flock of young, white, tender-fleshed, downy geese at a great price. She had told him of all the things she meant to buy for the price of the geese. No! he could not return to her defeated. Nor would he do it.

Filled with rage and mumbling to himself, he started into the wide world, determined to take his revenge. He picked up odd jobs as he went along; he worked at anything that offered itself and carefully put penny to penny.

In his wandering he got acquainted with foreign languages. Matyi passed many large cities and stopped for a while in each of them, working at some job or the other.

He did not only pick up a little of several languages, but he also learned the secrets of many trades at which he had a try.

By and by Matyi felt confident that his funds would last and his new experiences help him to carry out his promise to Döbrögi.

"I must keep my word to Döbrögi," he thought virtuously. "I must begin. I must give him the first thrashing. Otherwise the squire will think I made an empty boast when I promised him three thrashings in return for his robbing me of my flock of young, white, tender-fleshed, downy geese and for the flogging I got into the bargain."

Since the time when the Squire stole Matyi's geese and

had him flogged into the bargain, our young friend's face had greatly changed. And, besides, at Döbrögi's mansion people had forgotten him since he had disappeared.

So Matyi went straight up to the mansion. He stopped at the threshold on the spot where in presence of the base Squire he had suffered the flogging.

The place was the same, but not the mansion. The old building had been torn down, and a more magnificent one was being built in its place. The palatial new residence was nearly finished; the walls were up, but as yet there was no roof on the building.

Uncut timber was piled up waiting to be used for the shingling of the new palace.

Looking at the pile of timber Matyi said to himself, "That comes handy—that's exactly what I can use. Döbrögi shall get his thrashing."

He cautiously withdrew to a place where he could change his appearance. He picked out a hand ax and other carpenter's tools, and looked like an Italian carpenter when he returned to Döbrögi's palace. He began to examine it as if he had been an expert. With his eyes he critically measured the width and length of the walls, then frowningly looked over the timber-pile. He smiled ironically, then shook his head.

Along came Squire Döbrögi. He stopped to watch the mysterious doings of the stranger. "What do you want?" Döbrögi asked at last.

"Nothing, sir. Passing this palatial residence, I couldn't help looking it over. Being of the profession, I can tell you

it is a delight to the eye, and whoever built it created a masterpiece. The stonework is perfect, it is wonderful. I wish I could also see the roof. I hope you don't intend to spoil the beautiful palace by using this poor timber?"

Döbrögi looked startled.

"Well," he said, "I had this timber cut from my forest."

"Oh," said Matyi, "it is quite good timber and would do for some ordinary little house, but it certainly would spoil the effect of such a beautiful palace. Really," he added, "one must go to Rome to see superb roofs."

"I, my gracious sir, have seen princely palaces, have even worked on one or two. Believe me, from this timber you can't get a roof worthy of the stonework."

Matyi looked deeply interested and seemed worried about the low quality of the timber. He drew out his foot rule and passed around the pile of wood.

"What a pity," he exclaimed with seemingly profound concern, "that it is too short by five feet! "But"—he interrupted himself—"it is none of my business. Excuse, sir, my meddling. I forgot myself. My professional interest was aroused."

He started as if he wanted to proceed on his way. But the dismayed Squire was aroused to anxiety. Moreover, his greed was awakened. Here was an obviously clever artisan foolish enough to throw out advice for nothing. And there was nothing Squire Döbrögi loved more than getting something for nothing.

"So you have traveled in the Italian land, sir," he said

politely to Matyi. "Won't you come in? Have you already had dinner? Maybe you can help me to perfect my palace. If you succeed you will find me a most generous patron."

Matyi smiled politely and lauded the Squire's good taste.

"I doubt, sir," he said to the greedily listening Döbrögi, "whether there is more adequate timber available around."

"Oh," exclaimed Döbrögi, "in the whole world you won't find more splendid woods than mine or more beautiful trees than those growing in my woods."

"Well, I should like to see those trees," said Matyi.

Squire Döbrögi immediately ordered horses to be harnessed to a coach; then he urged the cook to get the dinner ready. While they were waiting for it, Matyi suggested that they mark and immediately fell all the trees he would find suitable for a roof.

"Have the *ispán* immediately come here," Döbrögi ordered. When the overseer came the Squire asked him to order two hundred woodcutters to be ready for the work.

The dinner soon was served and eaten, and the coach dashed up to the entrance of the mansion. They arrived in no time at the edge of the forest, where the two hundred woodcutters were waiting with their axes.

It was a magnificent oak wood and Matyi with inward glee got busy. Busy indeed! He marked the most beautiful trees to be felled. Right and left he marked them until all the two hundred woodcutters were sweating with the work.

"But all that is not enough," he said to the delighted Squire. "We need a few particularly perfect specimens,"

and artfully he led Döbrögi deeper into the wood, away from his men. In a thickly grown grove he exclaimed at the sight of a beautiful, rugged old tree: "There, my gracious sir, there seems to be the perfect tree. If it only turns out thick enough."

The Squire embraced the tree to measure its girth. At that moment Matyi, from the other side of the tree, got hold of the Squire's hands and tied them with a rope he had held ready for this purpose.

"I am not a carpenter, sir. I am Ludas Matyi, whom you flogged and whose flock of young, white, downy, and tender-fleshed geese you stole, and who vowed that he would get even with you three times."

With these words he cut a strong, rugged branch off the tree and started to belabor the dumbfounded Squire. Matyi covered Döbrögi with hard blows. He did not spare Döbrögi, but to be just we must admit he did not spare his own arm either. Döbrögi wriggled and shouted in vain. The noise of two hundred axes striking age-old oak trunks filled the forest. The Squire shouted himself hoarse. In vain!

When Matyi considered the first part of his debt paid, he picked out of the Squire's pocket the price of the flock of geese and disappeared in the woods.

By and by the woodcutters finished their jobs and took a rest. The best part of the magnificent forest was felled. The sun dropped down to the rim of the horizon. The woodcutters, waiting for the return of the Squire and the Italian carpenter, grew tired of loafing.

At last the overseer became anxious. He halloed into the wilderness. The men all were quiet, and only the owls hooting cut into the intense twilight stillness.

The overseer, getting no response, asked the men to help him call out for the master. Their voices rose, and the darkening wilderness was filled with their shouting. They listened—but no response! The overseer became quite frightened and ordered the men to comb the woods for the Squire and his companion.

“Men,” he said to them, “something must have happened to our Master.”

They started out in all directions, and one group arriving in a valley heard a wail as from a wounded beast. They cautiously moved toward the direction of the sounds and peered curiously into the growing darkness.

“Heavens, what a sight!”

There was their master tied to a large tree, his mouth stuffed with moss and his rich clothing torn to frazzles.

They cut him loose and pried the moss out of his mouth. The fear-struck overseer humbly asked what pagan assassin had attacked the master so frightfully?

It took some time before Squire Döbrögi could answer. His eyes were bloodshot and his voice trembled with rage. He moaned at last:

“That scoundrel Ludas Matyi has murdered me. Oh, that rascal! Oh, oh!”

The serfs tugged each other's short jackets and winked at each other secretly while their master wailed:

"Oh, children, take me home. Quickly take me home or else I die."

The good people took pity on him. They forgot how mean he was to them, and they carried him gently to his coach. Some of the men gathered plenty of moss to make the Squire comfortable. One put his *szür* under him, another took down his *suba* to cover the Squire with it. The horses carried him home at a gentle trot.

At home an old woman brewed a healing concoction. She burned two pints of wine with soap and rubbed the moaning and groaning Squire with the liquid.

No one was permitted to close an eye that night in the Squire's household. At his least stir, five or six menservants and as many female domestics rushed to his bedside for orders. They hopped over one another, crashed into each other in their haste to serve the master. There was such an ado!

III

Where was our friend Matyi meanwhile? Scores of men were hunting for him, but under the cover of darkness he soon escaped over the border and was busily planning new methods to chastise Squire Döbrögi.

During his first wanderings after the loss of his geese he had served for a considerable time at an old doctor's. Matyi had served the old man faithfully and felt sure he would be glad to see him again. And so it was.

Matyi bound himself to the old doctor as apprentice and bargained that he should teach him the fancy names of the

well-known ailments, the healing herbs, powders, instruments, plasters, ointments, baths, and other things those of the healing profession have to know.

Our Matyi had a good head on his shoulders. Two weeks had hardly passed when he could recite the names of diseases in Greek or Latin as if he really knew all about them. And he could also concoct some remedies with the profound air of a learned doctor.

Then he borrowed from Dr. Scorbuntius an old wig, some instruments, his old horse, leather trousers, and the old field jacket. He meant to have a carnival at the Squire's.

The old Doctor lent him everything he wanted, because he knew he could trust Matyi.

So Matyi donned Dr. Scorbuntius's old outfit and began to behave as if he were a doctor. Scorbuntius laughed loud at the sight of Matyi, the bewigged doctor.

After taking leave of the old man, Matyi started his horse in the direction of the Squire's estate.

Döbrögi hadn't recovered yet from the thrashing Matyi had given him in the woods. His body still showed black and blue spots from it. Yet here was Matyi again to keep his savage promise.

The Squire had surrounded himself with armed servants. Halberdiers and men with lances were his bodyguard. But all the precaution could not keep Matyi away from him.

When Matyi arrived at the last village he hired a guide to take him to the hamlet Döbrög. In a soldierly tone he demanded there from the magistrate of the village a guard,

and, feigning a foreign accent, he ordered that he be taken to the near-by military headquarters for medical duties.

The village magistrate rushed to the Squire to tell of the arrival of a military doctor. Döbrögi greedily asked him to bring the army surgeon to his rescue. The Squire, not accustomed to bodily suffering, had asked advice about his pains from anyone who happened to turn up. He had asked the cartwright, the horse doctor, the blacksmith, and many others, but none of them had helped much.

He sent an imploring message to Matyi and begged him by everything he held sacred to come if only to glance at his scars and wounds. He sent him promises of lordly reward if he would come to see him, and offered to send him in his own coach to the military headquarters.

Matyi kept shrugging his shoulders at the Squire's messages. He certainly didn't seem eager to visit the patient. The Squire's messengers nearly dragged him to their master.

I need not say that Matyi had cleverly made up his face and easily talked with a foreign accent. All in all, he was well disguised.

Squire Döbrögi was in bed with a sore back. He nearly jumped out of his skin with joy when the learned looking army surgeon arrived. He implored him in the name of heaven to help him out of his misery.

Matyi looked serious. Matyi looked profound. He felt the Squire's pulse and dropped the patient's hand in alarm.

"Why, sir," he said, highly concerned, "you have a terrible fever. We must immediately have a bath and leeches—

because, sir, if your blood isn't drained immediately, it will rush to your heart as sure as——" And the sly fellow shrugged his shoulders as if shaking off all responsibility for that terrible possibility.

The Squire broke out in alarmed perspiration. He implored Matyi by all the Saints to use all the wisdom God had given him to save his life.

Matyi settled to profound meditation. As all learned doctors do, he put his finger speculatively to his wrinkled brow. He looked the perfect image of a wise doctor. He was as good an imitation as you could find in seven countries, seven counties, nine cities, and any number of villages.

At last he thumped his forehead with the third finger of his right hand and started dealing out orders.

"A bath, quickly," he ordered, "and herbs." Like a torrent he poured out the names of countless herbs, that is to say, of weeds of every description.

"Bring them," he ordered, "and quickly, if I am to snatch him out of the jaws of death."

Matyi was nearly out of breath, but he continued to order:

"Let all available members of the household rush to the meadows, parks, and woods to bring all these herbs, and bring quantities of them. And meantime set a fire under the kettle—quick, quick, everyone—rush!"

The army of servants did rush away. They all ran as fast as they could. The menservants, the bodyguard, the kitchen-maids, the cooks, the maids and the housekeeper, the butler and the valet, the courier, the coachmen, the horse grooms,



HE LOOKED THE IMAGE OF A WISE DOCTOR

and woodcutters—they all ran to pick the life-saving herbs.

Only a lame old female was left in the house to attend to the fire under the kettle. But Matyi got rid of her too. He sent her to the curate to have him pray for the Squire.

Then he turned to Döbrögi. Pretending to examine the Squire's swollen eyes he passed a kerchief several times over his face. Suddenly he covered Döbrögi's mouth with the kerchief and tied it with a hard knot at the back of his head.

"Sir!" he then said. "I am not an army surgeon. I am Ludas Matyi whom you had flogged; whose geese you stole—but I won't waste words. Enough to tell you that I am here to pay the second installment of my debt as I have promised. And not to let you suffer with long waiting, let's get over it right away. If God preserves my strength, I will not fail soon to deliver the rest of my debt."

Without further ado he gave the Squire the second thrashing. Döbrögi shouted, yelled, howled, and roared; his voice rent the air. But there was nobody in the mansion to answer his shrieks. His bodyguard, the menservants, the kitchen-maids, the cooks and the maids, the housekeeper and the butler, the valet, the horse grooms, the couriers, the coachmen, the woodcutters, they were all away in the meadows and woods picking weeds for the bath of their master. And the lame old woman was praying with the curate for the Squire's recovery.

Matyi drew the key to the strong box from under the Squire's pillow and said:

"I will just take out the price of my flock of young, white,

tender-fleshed, downy geese you stole and the amount of my expenses." Doing so, he said good-bye to the exhausted Squire, went out, mounted his horse, and galloped away.

After a while, the servants began to return, heavily laden with all the absurd weeds. A maid was the first to reach the master's sick-room. When she saw Döbrögi's mottled face, she emitted a piercing shriek and ran out to the court.

"What's the matter?" they asked her from all sides.

"Where is the doctor?" asked the butler. They wondered who had maltreated their master.

"Who in the world has gagged him?" asked the valet.

"Let's go to free him," said the housekeeper.

Döbrögi, more dead than alive, breathed hard and nearly fainted. It took ever so long before he could falteringly tell them that it was Ludas Matyi who had maltreated him again.

Everyone who could mount a horse rushed out in wild pursuit of Matyi. But there was no trace of him left. He had long crossed the border. Triumphant and with a well-filled purse he returned to Dr. Scorbuntius. He gave back to the old man every bit he had borrowed from him and threw the story of his beating the Squire into the bargain. And Dr. Scorbuntius laughed nearly as much as Squire Döbrögi had howled.

IV

By now Döbrögi was really ill. They had to call real doctors to him, and sent warrants out all over the country to arrest Matyi wherever found.

The trouble, however, was that no adequate description of Matyi could be given, as he looked different every time he met the Squire.

The Matyi from whom Döbrögi had stolen the flock of young, white, tender-fleshed, downy geese was a young country lad. The Matyi paying the first installment of his debt to the Squire looked like a mature foreign artisan. And quite different looked the learned and dashing army surgeon who had administered the second thrashing.

There are people who doubt everything. They even doubt the story of Ludas Matyi. But those learned in Hungarian legal matters are able to prove the truth of this story. They can point out the paragraph in the great *Verböcgy* that tells that all who are found guilty of offenses like those committed by our friend Matyi are called *ludas* in the matter they are accused of.

But to get back to our hero. Matyi could not be found and Döbrögi was roaring mad at the failure to find the culprit. There were moments when nobody would have given a cent for the Squire's life. But the learned doctors and wise Nature pulled him through. Here covered slowly, but he recovered, and that's the chief thing.

But Matyi's nickname "Ludas," reminding him of geese, became so offensive to Döbrögi's ears that he simply could not stand it. He even balked at anything referring to geese. He ordered the killing of all geese on his estate and around in the country. He fainted at the mere sight of goose feathers.

Döbrögi employed twenty special lancers, ten of whom had to guard his palace by day; the other ten were on duty by night.

Nobody could approach the palace unless he was known to the guard.

When the Squire left his palace, even if he did not go beyond his estate, his coach was escorted by ten lancers on horseback.

Our Matyi knew all this very well, yet he was determined to keep his promise to thrash the Squire three times, at any price.

It simply had to be done.

At a certain time there was again a fair in Döbrögi's hamlet, just as at the time when Matyi brought his mother's geese to the market. Matyi appeared like many other people on horseback and looked around among the horses for sale. He picked out a particularly temperamental horse and asked the owner—a lad unknown to him—the price.

"It is only a hundred gold pieces, sir," the lad answered.

"Friend, how can you ask so much?" said Matyi reproachfully. "For that amount I get ten horses, and perhaps better ones."

"But, sir, I let my eyes be cut out with steel if, great as our country is, you find anywhere in Hungary a better horse than this."

"Well," Matyi said, "I'm willing to buy the horse at your own exorbitant price if you do what I tell you."

He winked at the lad, pulled him aside, and whispered:

"You see, there lives the Squire of this hamlet. He is not afraid of anything on earth or in heaven except of the name Ludas Matyi. Perhaps you know that. People here around do know how afraid he is of the name Ludas Matyi.

"Soon he will pass that way in his coach. The lancers ride as his guard. When they reach the edge of the forest, gallop toward them, confront the Squire and tell him to his face that you are Ludas Matyi. But when you have done that run as fast as you can. Run, because the devil will take you if they catch you."

"If you run fast enough to escape, I will buy your horse for the hundred gold pieces you ask for it. To assure you that I mean what I say I will advance ten gold pieces and pay the rest when you return here safely."

The lad was of adventurous spirit and liked the bargain. He could hardly wait for the Squire's appearance. At last a noisy commotion announced Döbrögi's approach. The mass of people parted to make way for his coach.

"Döbrögi is coming," the news spread.

Matyi's new friend could hardly control his impatience. As soon as Döbrögi and his escort approached the edge of the forest, he darted after him on his horse like lightning.

"Stop, stop, gentleman," he shouted, and dashed up to the coach. "Do you know, sir, who I am? I am Ludas Matyi!"

The Squire grew purple in the face, and before the lad could say another word Döbrögi had hissed the order to catch him. Easier ordered than done!

On his swift-footed horse the lad sped away far ahead of the pursuing bodyguard.

The Squire gnashed his teeth as he saw the distance grow between the alleged Ludas Matyi and his pursuers.

"Unharness your horse," he shouted at the coachman. "It is a better horse than any of theirs; follow them and tell that I'll pay a hundred gold pieces to him who catches my tormenter. Go ahead, go!"

Döbrögi rose in the coach and with bulging eyes followed the course of his men. At this moment Matyi left the bushes where he had hidden and pulled the Squire at his sleeves.

"What are you staring at, sir? They aren't going to catch that lad. And besides—he isn't Ludas Matyi. I am Matyi, whom you had flogged and whom you robbed of a flock of young, white, tender-fleshed, downy geese."

Döbrögi nearly had a stroke. And maybe he would have preferred a stroke to what he knew was waiting for him.

He toppled over and fell fainting from the coach. Matyi felt he had to keep his word and then and there gave Döbrögi the third thrashing he had promised him.

Taking the price of the stolen geese from the Squire's pocket, he said: "That was the last installment, sir. You don't need to be afraid. I'm not going to thrash you any more. We are even. You stole my flock of young, white, tender-fleshed, and downy geese which I promised my mother to sell at a great price. My mother wanted to buy winter stock with the money. You stole my geese, you robbed my mother."

Döbrögi groaned, but Matyi continued: "I got even with you. From now on you can live without fear; that was the last thrashing."

Matyi mounted his horse and left.

It was a long time before the ten lancers and the coachman returned on their exhausted horses. They were themselves too tired to make much of the Squire's pitiful condition. They reported curtly that it was impossible to catch Matyi.

"It wasn't Matyi at all," groaned Döbrögi. "The son of a devil was here and thrashed me for the third time."

But the third installment had a magic effect. The Squire realized how wrong his former ways were and that he had caused Matyi's rage by the wrong he had done to him.

Döbrögi sent away the extra bodyguard of twenty lancers to show that he meant to live so that no special protection was needed against anyone's vengeance. He learned to respect other people's rights and lived happily, known thenceforth as the "Righteous Squire."

Ludas Matyi at last returned to his overjoyed mother and shook the threefold price for her flock of geese into her lap. He set himself to work his mother's estate and made a great success of it.

It would be impossible to count how often he told the story of his getting even with Squire Döbrögi.

If you ask his grandchildren what story they want you to tell them, you must be prepared to hear them call for Ludas Matyi, of whom they are as fond and proud as any children can be of any grandfather.



GENERATIONS of Ghéczy's owned this castle and filled the pages of its chronicle with sad and gay stories. If you visit Ghéczy Castle, the guide showing you over the ancient fortress will tell you some of the old stories with great gusto.

So you will hear of one Ghéczy who lived many, many centuries ago and had so much gold that he did not know what to do with it. His serfs were poor and ragged, but it never occurred to him that he might employ some of his gold to better their lot. Yet he wanted to use the gold in some way.

He racked his brain for an idea, for a long time in vain. One sleepless night he was tossing on his huge four-poster in the vast and low-ceilinged sleeping chamber when an idea struck him at last.

Ghéczy decided to have a bull cast of gold. He invited artists to the castle and ordered the golden bull to be molded.

The artists were at first startled with the idea of wasting all the treasure on such a useless thing as a golden bull.

"Let us carve a bull of stone," suggested one of the artists.

Ghéczy interrupted him impatiently. "I don't want a stone bull. I want a bull of gold."

"Why not carve a bull of wood?" said another of the artists.

Ghéczy stamped with his foot and arrogantly decreed:

"A gold bull it is to be and nothing else, gentlemen. Get to work. There is the gold!"

They were standing in a huge room filled from floor to ceiling with the glittering yellow metal.

The artists shrugged their shoulders and set to work.

Soon they were able to present the bull of gold to Ghéczy, who ordered it to be placed in the center of the castle.

When the artists asked Ghéczy to pay them for the work, the lord of the castle said:

"Well, you molded the bull, but he is immovable. He does not eat or drink. Put life into the bull or I put life out of you."

The startled artists protested against this demand.

"We cannot put life into a golden bull," they said. "How could we?"

Ghéczy, however, stubbornly demanded the impossible from them.

"I give you three more days," he hurled at the artists. "If by that time the bull won't move, I will have you all beheaded at dawn of the fourth day." The fierce lord looked determined enough to carry out his sinister threat.

The allotted days passed all too quickly, and the artists prepared to die.

But when the third day drew to its close an earthquake sent a tremor through the fortress. The earth shook, the stone walls cracked, and the golden bull trembled. The golden bull moved.

Another tremor shook the castle, and the earth opened under the bull and swallowed it.

The bull had moved indeed! It had moved away from the face of the earth, disappearing forever in the depths below the castle.

The artists triumphantly claimed their lives and their fees for the work.



THERE was once a distinguished family in Bodrog County whose members all had been in prominent positions.

When old Kúnfalvi died he left two sons who were the last members of the family, all the other branches having died out.

Kúnfalvi's widow was a proud old lady who set her heart at seeing her sons climb the highest rungs of the social ladder. One of the sons was as ambitious as his mother. Albert, the younger son, conformed to all the demands of society and was his mother's pet. He was also a social favorite, much sought after, and he soon held office in the county, climbing rapidly higher and higher.

András, the older brother, however, was as different from Albert as the sun is from the moon. And he was also as far from his mother's heart. She felt that András frustrated all her ambitions, and she kept nagging him to follow his brother's example. That is to say, she nagged him when

she could get hold of him, which became more and more difficult.

The more Mrs. Kúnfalvi nagged her son the longer he stayed away from home.

One day Mrs. Kúnfalvi told the servants to send András to her as soon as he arrived home, at whatever hour he entered the mansion, day or night.

The second day András came home, long after midnight, riding his beloved mare.

The servants told him in hushed voices of his mother's wish, and András immediately went into her chamber. He kissed his mother's hand respectfully and sat down, waiting to hear why she had called him at such an unusual hour.

The mother looked at her son with burning eyes.

"Look at yourself," she said with a hard voice. "Aren't you ashamed of yourself? You look like a peasant! Aren't you ashamed?"

"No, Mother, I am not. Why should I be? Peasants are honest folk and I like them. Like them better than our empty crowd."

"You perverse creature," shrieked Mrs. Kúnfalvi, "to speak with contempt of your own set, you——"

"Well, Mother, don't get excited. I won't say anything against your set, but I will hold out for my friends the peasants, among whom I feel happy."

Mrs. Kúnfalvi had hysterics at these words. Her maids rushed in to quiet their mistress with smelling salts and other applications.

When the attack was over and the servants retired, Mrs. Kúnfalvi took up the thread again. "My dear boy," she implored, using now softer tones, "don't you see you break my heart demeaning yourself into a peasant? András, my son, Bandi, my child—for me you are still Bandi, the child—don't demean yourself, Bandi."

"It is not demeaning myself," András tried to explain. But his mother waved him aside and continued:

"Child, don't you realize what it is you are throwing wilfully away? You could fill any office, as your brother does; you would be welcomed in the oldest families to which we proudly belong. You could distinguish yourself in the army, you could become a bishop. Everything is open to you, and you neglect all the opportunities to enhance our family name and to serve your country."

"But, Mother, I don't care for the opportunities. Social honors don't mean anything to me. I am happy when I am near the soil."

"Near the soil! Among peasants, you want to say, you unnatural creature!" Another sobbing fit shook her and the maids rushed in with the smelling salts.

It was András who spoke first when she was quiet again.

"Please, Mother, let me tell you what the soil and the peasants, the cowboys and the shepherds mean to me."

"No, no, I don't want to hear about those vulgar people. Cowboys and shepherds my son's companions!"

She wrung her hands in despair and repeated with utter

contempt: "Peasants, cowboys, shepherds the companions of a Kúnfalvi! Shades of your ancestors!"

"Let my ancestors repose, Mother, and let me follow the life that suits me best," said András with such sincerity that it should have melted his mother's heart.

But the proud old woman did not understand this son of hers, the simplicity of his desires, the happiness he found in his own way. Again she tried in cajoling tones: "András, my son, Bandi, you are young and foolish, you don't know what you are missing when you avoid your own family and its associates. You were a beautiful child, and have developed into a beautiful man, well built and strong." András's golden tanned cheeks darkened; he blushed under his mother's admiring words.

"But, Mother——" He tried in vain to stop her.

"I wish your brother Albert were like you in body, as I wish you were like him in mind. Won't you listen to me, Bandi?"

"I do listen to you, Mother, but I cannot ruin my life by taking the course you wish. It would stifle me, cramp me, make me unahppy!"

He had not finished the sentence when an attack, worse than the former, seized his mother. She broke out into hysterical laughter that rang through the whole house.

The poor servants were exhausted by the time they had quieted their mistress.

"Hear my last word, András," his mother said when she

could speak again: "You can endear yourself to me if you marry and bring a daughter into my widowed mansion. You have the pick of all the girls of our set. Any of the girls of our acquaintance shall be welcome as my daughter. Do but marry, my son, and your whole outlook on life will be changed."

András sat silent, his face serious and very sad.

"I can't, Mother! I can't marry any of the girls of our acquaintance. I do not love any of them. I can't."

"Then you love, perhaps, a peasant girl of your set," the mother said in a voice as cold as steel.

András did not answer. The color in his cheeks heightened. He got up and, bowing over his mother's hand, kissed it respectfully and was about to leave.

"Stop!" cried Mrs. Kúnfalvi. "You can't leave me without an answer."

"I have answered you, Mother," said András. "There is nothing to add. I want to live near the soil, where I can watch the skies and the stars, where the winds are hurrying unhampered through space; where the blessed wheat is growing for all of us, and where people love me for myself, and where I like the animals in their usefulness and beauty."

Mrs. Kúnfalvi had fainted, overwhelmed by her outraged emotions. András called in the maids, not knowing whom to pity more, his unnerved mother or her exhausted servants.

When Mrs. Kúnfalvi regained consciousness she beckoned András to her side:

"You are killing me with your stubborn resistance to my pleas. Have you not a son's heart in your breast?"

"My heart is your son's heart, as yours is my mother's heart. But, Mother dear," and he spoke now nearly in a whisper, "can't you see that you ask me to lead a life that would be unbearable for me?"

"You are not my son," shrieked Mrs. Kúnfalvi. "You are not my son any more. I will disown you. I will curse you. Go, go, go away!"

András stood stock still at this onslaught. Not a muscle in his face betrayed the emotions provoked by his mother's terrible words. He took his little round hat with the maiden-hair fern, shook himself as if shaking off his entire past, and left his mother's mansion.

He rode away on his mare into the dark night.

There was an ancient flour mill neighboring on the Kúnfalvi estate. The miller was an old man and lived there with his only grandchild, lovely Piroska.

The old man was famous for his eternal drinking and singing, and for his friendship with the old village gypsy who kept the miller company in drinking. The miller sang and the gypsy fiddled. They never tired of it. They sang old sad songs with the memory of the past in them, quiet restful songs, and wild *csárdás*, according to their mood.

The miller's granddaughter would climb down from her chamber to watch the old man and his friend, the pock-marked old gypsy.

She was a lonely girl with a heart longing for something to fill her futile life. The only thing for her to do was the nursing of her flowers in the pots on the windowsills and in the tiny garden between the mill and the brook whose water drove its wheels.

There had been only one noteworthy event in her drab young life. An unknown young man, beautiful as a sun god, with sad eyes like one haunted by terrible memories, stopped one day for a drink, when she was just watering the flowers in her little garden.

They had looked deep into each other's eyes, so similar in sadness. But they had exchanged only a few words.

The evening after András left his home he rode up to the mill and knocked at the door.

The old miller opened the door and András entered. He stroked his mustaches and pushed his round little hat with the maidenhair fern somewhat to the side and said:

"I like your granddaughter, my good uncle. Don't let me waste words: give her to me as wife."

The old miller emptied the glass of wine standing in front of him before he answered:

"And who and what may you be, my young friend?" he asked scanning his guest's face with a strange expression.

"I am a cowboy on the *alföld*. I have a ranch with cattle and live on my own."

Instead of saying anything, the old miller broke out into a cowboy song, and the pockmarked old gypsy fell in with the accompaniment on his fiddle.

When they were through with the song the miller filled a glass with wine, pushed it in front of András, and said: "Drink, my young friend." Then he spat on the floor, pushed the long-stemmed pipe deep into his mouth, and looking at his guest with a strange expression he said: "So you be a cowboy on the *alföld*. Well, well!" After a while he added: "Since when do you know my granddaughter, Piroska?"

Warmed by his glass of wine, András looked tenderly at the young girl, who had been spinning in a corner of the room, blushing and paling during the preceding scene:

"I have known her only a short while, but I know her very well," András said.

The old miller looked all the while with that strange expression at his visitor. "Well, young man," he said slowly, as the Hungarian peasants are in the habit of speaking, "I am glad to see a suitor in the house. But I think we must not be too rash in such important matters. It is best to take time to think them over. We should first sleep over them. In sleep we get wise counsel." The miller spat on the floor, wiped his mouth with his sleeve, emptied another glass of wine, wiped his mouth after that again with his sleeve, and then proceeded with his slow speech.

"Stay overnight under my roof, and we may dream what to do."

"As you wish," said András and settled down with the old man at the table.

The miller and his guest emptied many glasses of wine and sang sad tunes and lively songs deep into the night.

Piroska continued to spin, blushing and paling, dropping the spindle ever so often. The old pockmarked gypsy played his fiddle even when he dozed off for little naps. Playing was in his bones, and he could do it automatically.

About midnight the old miller showed his guest to his sleeping place in the loft where András threw himself on the fragrant hay. The old gypsy slept in the corner near the kitchen stove and Piroska in her little chamber.

Great stillness settled over the mill, and soon everyone was asleep. Nobody heard a carriage which left the house stealthily late in the night.

The first rays of the sun waked the sleepers. Piroska soon was down in her flower garden.

"What did you dream, my dove?" asked András tenderly when he joined her.

"It's your turn to tell first what you dreamed," said Piroska, plucking a red rose to pieces.

"I dreamed I was plowing a golden field with a silver plow. I planted pearls and reaped roses from them. Of the roses I built a nest on the top of a cedar tree. A couple of doves were nestling in it. One was you and the other was I."

Piroska scattered the rose leaves around and told her dream:

"I dreamed I was dead and buried on a high mountain top. Rosemary was planted over my tomb, and girls danced around it. They plucked the flowers and made a bridal wreath of it, weeping all the time."

"Well, didn't you dream of me?"

Piroska blushed and did not answer.

The loving young couple were surprised by the sound of wheels. The miller returned from his mysterious ride.

"Grandfather, didn't you sleep at all?" asked Piroska.

"Oh, I did sleep, and I dreamed too," the old man said. Then he turned to András and said:

"Go home, Bandi, and think over your proposal. If there is no obstacle and you return in three weeks, you may have Piroska."

András took tender leave of the girl, shook the miller's hand heartily, and rode away on his mare.

He meant to stay at home for three weeks and then to claim the beloved girl.

When he arrived at the Kúnfalvi mansion he was asked to the gallery where the portraits of his ancestors hung in stiff rows. His mother with burning eyes and folded hands whose trembling she hardly could conceal was sitting there with his brother Albert.

The slick-haired younger brother advanced toward András and mockingly said: "Where did you get that flour dust on your coat?"

At this question the world began to whirl around for András. In a flash he put things together. The drunken miller had recognized him and not believed him when he presented himself as a cowboy and farmer. The old man had gone in the dead of the night to tell his mother of his proposal. That explained the miller's demand: "Go home and think

it over and if there is no obstacle you can come in three weeks and have Piroska."

"Shame on you," said the proud mother, "to stoop to a peasant girl to defame your noble ancestors' name."

"Any family could be proud of a girl so pure and lovely."

"I won't listen to you. If you hold to your decision you are no son of mine. Curse upon you!"

András's blood was boiling.

"You have cursed me, Mother. I am leaving you never to return!"

He rushed out of the ancestral hall, threw himself on his horse, and galloped away at such a pace that the hoofs of his mare barely touched the ground.

The shrill laughter of his mother followed him.

That night fire was set to the mill. The blazing flames lighted the horizon. The firemen approaching hurriedly from all the neighboring villages saw a rider on a black horse with a white form in his arms disappear in the darkness.

Piroska trembled in the cool of the night and snuggled closer to her lover's breast. At dawn they stopped on the top of a hill and rested at the foot of a shrine.

"How shall I call you, my angel?" the girl asked.

"You just called me 'Angel,' why not make this my name?"

"And your other name?"

"It's András for others, but Bandi for you."

After a little rest the young couple proceeded, and later stopped at a peasant's hut.

"This is a restful place, my dove," said Bandi. "If you will stay here awhile, I shall look around for a suitable place to build our nest. Wait for me, my darling."

Angyal Bandi rode away.

Piroska counted the hours, then the days, but her lover did not return.

Strange rumors began to be whispered about a bandit whose daring amazed and frightened the country. Soon a name was whispered, and the name was Angyal Bandi, Bandi Angel.

Piroska paled under the rumors. As the days passed and her lover did not return she pined away like a rose cut off its bush. She cried her heart out in silent agony and wandered around in the fields like her own shadow.

One day a sunburned young rider emerged from the distant woods. His face was lighted with an inner glow. Happiness radiated from his features. A lovely hut was ready, waiting for his bride. He spurred his horse to fly toward the simple peasant's hut, where he had left his Piroska.

"You are too late," said the simple peasant woman when Bandi arrived at her door.

"Your beloved lies in the cool ground. She pined away like a rose broken from the bush."

"A terrific shout broke out of Angyal Bandi's throat. He shook in an agony of pain. His eyes became bloodshot, and he staggered as if he had been struck with a heavy blow. Without a word he threw himself on his horse and rode away like mad.



ANGYAL BANDI RODE AWAY

After that the whole country was held in terror by a bandit who seemed to invite death with unprecedented deeds of daring. Other bandits followed him and made him their chief, and there is no end to the stories telling of their deeds that kept all Hungary in terror for many years, until the fate of all bandits overtook Angyal Bandi.

At the trial the Judge was startled when he scrutinized the bandit's face. Angyal Bandi stood there, proud, defiant, not denying any of his deeds, shielding all his accomplices by taking the guilt all alone on himself.

The longer the Judge looked at the prisoner in heavy irons, the more ill at ease he felt.

"Have you not lived in Kúnfalú?" the Judge asked Bandi.

"Never in my life," the prisoner answered, without a flicker of his eye.

"What is your real name?"

"It is Angyal Bandi," Bandi Angel replied.

"Have you no relatives?"

"Neither on earth nor in heaven." And his brother Albert pronounced the death sentence.

When Angyal Bandi was hanged, the other bandits stole his corpse, and nobody ever found out where they buried him.

His name lives to this day in the songs and in the imagination of the Magyar peasants.



The golden fleeced lamb

THERE was once a poor man who had a lot of children. So many children that he simply could not count them. Whatever the poor man tried he could not provide enough to eat, and the children were eternally crying for bread.

The poor man was distracted with worry but could not imagine what to do to get enough food for his innumerable children. He told them to look for work, but his children were lazy and did not want to work. One of them, however, was an exception.

The youngest of them, Peti, was different from all the rest. He wanted to work. Peti could not stand his elder brothers' and sisters' loafing. One day this youngster told his father that he was going into the wide, wide world and would not stop until he had found a good job.

The poor father was glad to have at least one bread eater less in the house and bade him Godspeed.

So the young lad left home and went into the wide, wide world. Peti walked and walked without pausing to eat. His side-bag was empty, as empty as his stomach.

"Well, at least I don't lose time stopping to eat," he thought when hunger was gnawing at his vitals. He walked over hills and dales, through meadows and forests, along bubbling brooks and shining rivers. By evening he arrived in a village. Here he learned of a very rich man who owned as many sheep as there are stars in the sky.

Peti heard that the rich man was just looking for a shepherd. He went straightway to the farmer and told him he was seeking a job.

"Well, you came just at the right moment," said the farmer. "I just have fired my shepherd and need another one. I am willing to give you the job, and if you serve me faithfully for a year, you will be richly rewarded."

The youngster was so happy that he wanted to shout and to dance with joy. But he neither shouted nor danced but politely asked the rich farmer what reward he could expect.

"Well, my lad," said the owner of the multitude of sheep, "if at the end of a year not one of my sheep is missing, I will give you a golden fleeced lamb that will enable you to live carefree until the end of the world and two days thereafter."

"Here's my hand, it's not a pig's foot," said the boy. They shook hands over the bargain and went home to the farm.

Peti got a well-filled side-bag and a lovely flute and drove the sheep out into the meadow.

There was something particular about this farmer's year of

service. It did not consist of more than three days. But even so, no shepherd was ever able to serve through the year without losing sheep. The trouble was the sheep had to be watched day and night, and if a shepherd dozed off and shut his eyes for the shortest possible nap, he was bound to miss a number of sheep.

Peti, however, managed without sleep. Whenever he felt drowsiness creeping over him, he took out his flute and played a lively tune. He played so lively that all the sheep began to dance, and danced as long as he blew his flute. And master dancer among all the dancing sheep was the golden fleeced lamb that kept dancing always in front of Peti as if it knew that it would soon belong to him.

At the end of the year Peti drove the flock of sheep home to the farm. When they reached the sheep yard Peti took out his flute and blew lustily into it. He played the liveliest air he knew, and the sheep immediately responded to the lively tune. They began to sway and to skip and to jump in perfect rhythm. They showed all their teeth in the joy of their hearts. And so they danced into the yard. To his unbounded pleasure the farmer found not a single sheep missing, and he showed his teeth just like the sheep, but he didn't look sheepish.

"Well, my lad, you did it. I must hand it to you. I am an oldish man, and I have eaten the greater part of my life's bread, but I certainly never had such a fine shepherd. I promised you the golden fleeced lamb, and yours it shall be. May it bring you luck and happiness."

Peti was overjoyed and wanted to shout and to dance. But he first took polite leave of the farmer and started homeward with his well-earned golden fleeced lamb. When he reached the end of the village at the edge of the forest, Peti unbent and shouted and yelled and danced with joy. The golden fleeced lamb was happy when it saw how happy its young master was.

When Peti was through with the celebration he proceeded with his golden fleeced lamb toward his home. They walked and walked until they arrived at a village. It was evening, and little yellow lights glimmered from the thatch-roofed huts. Peti stopped at one of the peasant's houses and asked for quarters overnight.

The friendly peasant invited Peti cordially to rest under his roof, and Peti asked leave to take his golden fleeced lamb with him into the room.

The family of the peasant was overcome with wonder over the golden fleeced lamb, the like of which none of them had ever seen. They couldn't take their eyes off the shining wonder until sleep closed them.

But Annikó, the daughter of the house, was so fascinated with the golden fleeced lamb that she could not sleep a wink. She thought and thought of the lamb, and a mad desire to own it seized her. Annikó got up stealthily and crept in the dark to the lamb. She thought she might take it away from the sleeping boy and hide it somewhere.

But the moment she touched the lamb her hands stuck to its fleece. She pulled and pulled, but was unable to free her

hands. They stuck as if plastered to the lamb. Annikó was shaken with fright but didn't dare to utter a sound. "What will happen if they find me fastened to the lamb?" she thought, nearly dying with shame.

At dawn Peti woke and saw Annikó stuck to his golden fleeced lamb. He rubbed his eyes, because he thought he might be dreaming. When he was sure that he was awake he tried to pry Annikó's hands loose, but that was impossible. The girl was inseparable from the lamb.

Peti was anxious to get home to his poor father and brothers and sisters and decided to start.

"I can't help it, Annikó," he said, "I have to leave with my lamb. I guess you will have to come with us."

As soon as they were out in the street Peti took his flute and played one of his lively tunes. And, lo! the wonder! The lamb began to dance and the girl fastened to its golden fleece danced too. Her wide skirts flew merrily around her dancing legs. They kicked up the dust in the village street as they went across it dancing. On their way they passed an old woman who was just about to put her bread into the baking oven. When she saw the carnival she rushed toward Annikó and wanted to strike the girl with her baking ladle. "You silly creature," she cried at Annikó, "why are you so silly, jumping around in the street at early dawn? Why do you make such a fool of yourself?"

But as soon as her baking-ladle touched Annikó it stuck to the girl's back as fast as Annikó's hand was stuck to the lamb's golden fleece. And what is more, as Peti hadn't

stopped playing the flute, the lamb and the girl had not stopped dancing. And there was the old woman fastened to them and dancing with them.

Dancing indeed! So they proceeded, kicking up more dust in the street. When they reached the church Father Balázs was just coming out from early mass, and after him came all the people who had attended the service.

The people laughed, but Father Balázs was very angry at the spectacle. He went to the old woman and slapped her with his stick. No sooner had the stick touched the old woman, than it stuck to her skirt and Father Balász stuck to his stick.

That was a spectacle the like of which no one had ever seen before. There was Peti marching ahead and playing lively tunes on his flute. And there was the lamb prancing in dance rhythm so that its golden fleece twinkled in the early sun; and stuck to the lamb, dancing Annikó with her skirts merrily spinning around her legs; the old woman with the baking ladle dancing so that her breath nearly failed her, and Father Balázs, kicking his heels high up under the force of Peti's lively playing.

When the people saw their pastor carried away at the end of the mad chain, they began to yell and to shout.

"Stop it," they shouted. "Don't carry our good Father Balázs away! Leave him alone! Don't you hear? Leave him alone!"

When the people saw that Peti was not heeding their demand they wanted to pull Father Balázs away. They

rushed after the dancing procession, and a man took Father Balázs's hand to pull him loose, but the man became as inseparable from the rest as the others from each other. The noise they made called all the people of the village from their huts and houses, and as Father Balázs was very popular, everyone wanted to help save him from the mad chain. But men, women, and children, as they touched the last in line led by the golden fleeced lamb, got inseparably fastened to each other. And, moreover, all of them had to dance and to dance lively, too. And the dust flew in clouds around them.

It was a sight!

By noon the dancing procession arrived at a town. Peti put his flute into his side-bag and entered an inn. The lamb and Annikó and the baking woman, and Father Balázs and all the men and women and children of the village came to a standstill. They enjoyed the rest and tried to disentangle themselves now that they were not compelled to dance.

But all their efforts were in vain. They were attached to each other inseparably.

While Peti was eating some food he asked the innkeeper what city it was they had entered.

"Why, it's the King's residence!" said the innkeeper. "Didn't you know that?"

Chatting with his host Peti learned that the King was in a great plight.

"You know," said the innkeeper, "we have a good king and we are sorry for him. He is a sad man, because his only child, our lovely Princess Erzsi, has never laughed in all her



THE DANCING PROCESSION ARRIVED AT TOWN

life. And, you know, people who don't laugh can't be happy."

Peti was deeply touched by the story of the unhappy princess who had never laughed in her life.

The innkeeper told him also that the King had announced that he would marry his daughter to the man who could make her laugh.

"Many a fine young man has tried to win the hand of the Princess, but none of them could get even a faint smile out of her. She is as gloomy as a prolonged spell of fall rain," the innkeeper said.

Peti thought and thought. Could he not try to make the Princess laugh?

"Well, I shall try my luck," he thought at last.

He stepped at the head of his procession and started toward the King's palace. But he did not play his flute, so his crowd followed him stepping quietly. He sent word to the King and asked permission to try to make the Princess laugh.

"All right, my son," said the King. "Go ahead and try. But you know, if you do not succeed in making her laugh, I will have you beheaded."

"Well, I have only one life and one death," said Peti. "I will risk it."

"Kindly have the princess step out into the porch," Peti said to the King. Then he went down into the court to his crowd, and the sad King settled with his sad daughter on the porch.

Peti's heart beat fast when he saw the lovely Princess who had never laughed in her life. Taking out his flute he played the liveliest tune he knew, and played it livelier than he ever played before.

What a commotion ensued!

The lamb seemed to feel what was at stake and started its dance with such a leap into the air that its golden fleece flickered with blinding brilliancy in the sunshine. And it pranced up and down and sideways to the left and to the right and up into the air again as if possessed with the very spirit of happy gayety.

And as the lamb jumped and leaped and pirouetted, so leaped and swayed and pirouetted Annikó and the baking woman and Father Balázs and the women and the children and the men of the village, in endless chain.

The King at first did not look down on the spectacle. His anxious eyes were fastened on his sad daughter's face.

Princess Erzsi, who had settled languidly with half-opened eyes, first looked down dreamily. But hardly had Peti put the flute to his mouth and the lamb made its first dancing step, than the Princess pulled herself up in her chair and opened her eyes wide. As wide as she had never opened them before. By the time the dance shiver had run down the whole length of the human chain and set them all into motion, the Princess Erzsi broke out into a peal of laughter that shook her from the soles of her feet to the crown of gold hair on her head.

As the lamb and Annikó and the baker woman and Father

Balázs and all the people of the village stepped livelier and livelier to and fro and zigzagged back and forth under Peti's compelling tune, the Princess laughed and laughed so that the tears rolled down her lovely cheeks.

The King also shed tears—tears of happiness that his daughter at last had learned to laugh, and tears of sheer amusement over the funniest spectacle he had ever beheld.

And the maids-in-waiting and the cavaliers of the King, they all laughed until they all thought they were going to die of laughter.

Never such merriment!

"Stop it, son, stop it!" panted the King. "My sides are splitting. Stop it, for heaven's sake! You kill us with laughter!"

Peti immediately stopped playing, and the lamb stopped dancing. But as the golden fleeced lamb stopped with a sudden jerk, Annikó's hands came loose, and the baker woman's hand was rent away from the girl's skirt, and Father Balázs felt suddenly separated. Down, down the chain jerky movements freed one from another until each of them stood for himself and herself, masters of themselves.

"Well, young shepherd, you did it! I will keep my word and give you my daughter in marriage and half my kingdom as a wedding present."

The King asked Father Balázs to marry the young couple immediately and invited the whole crowd to stay at his court. Every one of them was knighted; even the gypsies became lords. And Peti sent a coach with six white horses

for his father and brothers and sisters. When they arrived there was great rejoicing about Peti's good fortune.

The King gave Peti's father a title and knighted all his brothers and made all his sisters ladies-in-waiting to Princess Erzsi.

For the golden fleeced lamb they built a special palace in the midst of green pastures and meadows.

And when the old King died Peti became King and Princess Erzsi Queen. They were the happiest pair that ever lived, and if they have not died they are still living happily.



The spinning feast

SUMMER passed, and the peasant women returned from the harvesting work in the hot fields to their cooler gardens in the villages. Autumn crept on slowly. The flowers in the gardens faded, the trees colored and then dropped their drying leaves until the bare brown branches stretched out, waiting for the snow to dress them in white furs.

“Well, girls,” said Mária Kerekes to her daughters, “it’s time to sit down to spinning.”

“Oh, lovely!” said Panni, the youngest. “I am longing to feel the fine thread gliding again through my fingers.”

“And it will be nice to hear some stories,” said Kati.

“We must invite the girls right away,” said energetic Boris, always ready for action.

"Slowly, girls," said the mother. "We first must make a thorough cleaning in the house."

"Of course," said the girls, turning up their sleeves to show that they meant it.

"Now, Panni," said Mrs. Kerekes, "you and Zsuzsi get busy in the kitchen. "Terka and I will set the guest room in order. Kati and Boris may clean up the living room. Father and the boys will see to the porch and the yard. Then we will send Máli around to invite the friends to the spinning feast."

The girls set vigorously to their assigned tasks, singing and humming while they worked, as Hungarians always do.

The kitchen was situated between the two rooms. The doors were left open, and the girls kept up a lively conversation and merry banter between songs.

In the kitchen the pottery with its designs of flowers and birds was put on display. Ornamental earthen jugs and dishes were put up on shelves. Pans, pots, and other kitchen utensils shone brightly. Dried red peppers, large ears of dry corn, strings of onions hung in their places.

"We are through with the living room," said Kati. "May we help with the guest room, Mother?"

"Are you sure, girls, everything is spick and span in the living room?" asked Mrs. Kerekes. "Have you swept thoroughly under the beds?"

"We have, Mother!" said Boris and Kati, eager to help in the guest room, the pride of the family. There was such a sweeping and shaking and brushing and dusting! And when

they were through, the room did look as pleasant as a Hungarian guest room in a peasant house can look.

The guest room is a combination of a bedroom, a dining room, and a parlor, and is called guest room because the family does not use it except when there are guests in the house.

The geraniums in the two small windows toward the street had burning red flowers and rich green leaves. Between the windows the large gaily painted *tulipános láda*, the Hungarian woman's hope chest, showed proudly its flowery design.

One corner of the room was filled by the huge *búbos* oven. Around it a hospitable bench invited the guests to sit, propped against the pleasantly warm wall of the *búbos* oven. In another corner stood a bench, and a table in front of the bench.

The best pieces of ornamental pottery were placed on shelves in this corner.

The almanacs and storybooks of the house were placed high up on the beams which supported the whitewashed ceiling.

The guest room is the pride of the Hungarian peasants' home, and the twin beds are the pride of the guest room. Mrs. Kerekes had piled the twin beds, which stood at the central wall of the room, up to the ceiling with the soft downy pillows. Generations of geese had contributed their down and feathers to fill these stacks of pillows. And generations of women had spun, woven, and embroidered the

pillow cases and the huge spreads which covered the wealth of pillows.

The spreads were pieces of art with their drawn-work patterns with the flowers and fancy designs embroidered into them by many women during long, long winter months.

The girls all looked admiringly at the room when Mária Kerekes declared it ready for the spinning feast.

Family photographs and pictures of saints, of Jesus Christ and of the Virgin Mary, hung on the whitewashed plastered walls, and the floor was covered with clean white sand.

The girls put on their best dresses for the spinning feast, and that meant all the colors gayly embroidered into their skirts, shirt sleeves, aprons, hair ribbons. Even their stockings and leather shoes were embroidered.

The *búbos* oven, fed from the outside with brightly burning wood, spread pleasant heat, the oil lamps a pleasant light when the guests, girls and women, arrived. Each guest brought her own distaff and spools. They settled immediately to the work.

Bundles of hemp and flax were unpacked and fixed on the distaffs and spinning wheels, and soon the room was filled with the gay chatter of the young girls who spun the yarn into their spools.

Mrs. Kerekes kept the matrons and older women for a while in the living room, to chat with them about the news of the village, the coming elections which interest and excite the Hungarian peasant women just as much as the men of the villages.

In the guest room the girls accompanied the spinning with lively gossip, and soon there was such a noise that Mrs. Kerekes, crossing the kitchen, opened the door to the guest room and said:

"*Ejnye*, girls, aren't you chatting all too much? I am afraid there will be little yarn spun if you talk instead of spinning."

"Oh, Kerekes néni, we are spinning, while we are talking," cried the girls, and they raised their spools, growing fat with thread.

"Well, I know you are working, children, but I think you are a little too noisy."

Before leaving the room, she shook her finger at them and said with mock seriousness:

"If you talk too much, I shall have to forbid you ever to marry, as the mother of the spinning sisters did."

"Oh, Auntie Kerekes, what did the mother of the spinning sisters do?" asked Ilud, famous for her insatiable curiosity.

Mrs. Kerekes laughed. "Don't you know, girls?"

"No," answered the girls in chorus.

"I see," said Mrs. Kerekes, "you want to draw a story out of me, but you must wait a minute."

Mrs. Kerekes went back to her friends in the dining room and brought them over to the guest room. When they too had settled with their distaffs and spools, Mrs. Kerekes, busily spinning herself, told the story of "The spinning sisters."



The spinning sisters

THERE was once a woman who had three daughters who talked so much that they never did their work properly. They would talk and talk and talk day and night.

They talked when they should have learned their lessons, and they talked while they ate their meals. They talked even in their sleep.

One day their mother gave each of the girls a bundle of hemp and asked her to spin it.

“But, Rózsi, Böske, Julis,” she said, “you must for once work without talking. Sit down and spin the hemp without saying a word. If any of you talks during the work, I will never permit her to marry.”

Their mother's command and threat startled the girls into silence. Holding their tongues, Julis, Böske, and Rózsi began to spin and spun lustily, on and on without saying a word. The girls nearly held their breath so that no word should escape them.

There was no noise except the pleasant purring of the spinning wheels. The mother hardly could believe that Rózsi, Böske, and Julis would keep quiet so long.

While the girls were storing the unuttered words behind their tongues, Julis's thread of hemp broke suddenly. "It broke!" she exclaimed, forgetting herself.

"Tie a knot," suggested Rózsi, also forgetting her promise. At that Böske broke out into laughter and exclaimed:

"Mother isn't going to let you girls marry."

"Nor will I let you, who joined them in talking," said the mother, entering the room just when her third daughter broke out talking.

Mrs. Kerekes stopped, and Panni exclaimed:

"Oh, Mother, is that all?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Kerekes dryly. "Isn't it enough?"

"No," said one of the guest girls. "Of course not. You don't mean to say that's the end of your story? Did the mother really not let the sisters marry?" she asked with such an alarmed expression that the whole company burst out laughing.

"Well, I guess she relented later," said Mrs. Kerekes. The young girl sighed with great relief.

"Now, girls," said old Julia Horvát, "some of you tell a story."

"Oh, Horvát *néni*, you tell one," said Boris, "you know we love to listen to you."

"Horvát *néni* pushed her chair a little toward the center, and without losing time to ask which story they wanted to hear, she told the story she herself liked best: "The legend of St. Elizabeth."



IT WAS a strange time, when infant girls and little boys hardly out of their baby clothes were betrothed to each other and married at a tender age.

Elizabeth, the daughter of King Andreas II of Hungary and of his wife, Gertrude of Meran, was hardly four years old when in the year 1211 she was solemnly affianced to Ludwig, who was eleven years old at the time of their betrothal.

Ludwig was the son of Hermann, Landgrave of Thuringen, a German principality. After the engagement the baby bride was taken away from her parents and brought to the Wartburg, the home of the Landgrave in far-away Thuringia. Among all the castles of feudal times the Wartburg held an exceptional place. It was a beautiful castle, but so

were many other castles. The Wartburg was enchantingly situated on the summit of a pine-clad mountain which lorded it over many ranges of green hills and mountains. But many other castles rose on lofty peaks, dominating the horizon. The Wartburg's special distinction was its hospitality to the arts, particularly to the art of music. The castle was the center of the greatest musical events of the age, and lovely harmonies filled its walls.

Little Elizabeth of Hungary grew up in this atmosphere of music and art. But her little heart was homesick. She was a lonely Hungarian princess at a lively German court. She remained a shy young girl, even when she grew up. Elizabeth did not enjoy the court life and avoided the joyous crowds. She devoted herself chiefly to meditation.

When the old Landgrave died, Ludwig became ruler of Thuringia. Elizabeth was fourteen years old when she and Ludwig were married. Her husband was engaged in tournaments, and Elizabeth shrank from the brilliant fêtes which filled the Wartburg with gay crowds and festivities.

Ludwig did not like her retired life. He wanted her to participate in the merry-making of the court, but could not induce her to do so. He jeered at her, and their life was not very happy. Elizabeth found her only consolation in deeds of mercy for which her husband had nothing but contempt. Ludwig went so far as to forbid her visits to the poor and the sick, and so robbed the child wife of the only thing she cared for.

One day, when Landgrave Ludwig of Thuringia was away

at a knightly feast of arms at a neighboring castle, Elizabeth could not resist the temptation of his absence to visit the poor, who, she felt, must have missed her since her husband had prevented her from visiting them.

She filled a basket with bread, and in a simple dress that she could not wear at court she started for the round of visits to the poor. Elizabeth descended through the fragrant pine woods to the valley at the foot of the Wartburg. She walked, lost in deep thoughts, hardly aware of the birds trilling their morning song in the forest. So deeply was she absorbed by her thoughts that she did not realize the approach of a knight who came riding toward her from the valley.

"Elizabeth!" The commanding voice of her husband startled poor Elizabeth out of her quiet meditation.

Landgrave Ludwig had left the tournament earlier than expected and on his way home encountered his wife.

Elizabeth's heart stood still as she faced her husband, who glared at her and at the basket on her arm.

"What are you doing here?" the Landgrave snarled at her. The bright plumes on his glittering helmet shook as he fiercely uttered these words.

Elizabeth looked with frightened eyes at her husband, but uttered no answer. Her silence enraged Ludwig, and he brutally caught her arm. "What have you in this basket, Elizabeth?" he asked.

The frightened child wife found no words. Landgrave Ludwig shook her arm, raging. "I am sure you are carrying alms to your friends the poor again, though I forbade you to do so."

The pale face of Elizabeth turned white. She trembled as she looked imploringly up at her cruel husband.

"No, Ludwig," she said at last with choking voice, "in the basket I am not carrying alms. Not bread I am carrying but roses."

Ludwig jerked the basket from her arm.

"Let me see your roses," he hurled at her, and tore the cover from the basket.

And lo! the basket was brimful with roses. The bread for the poor had turned into fragrant dark red roses.

It was now Ludwig who felt ashamed of himself and asked Elizabeth's pardon. After the transfiguration of the bread into roses the Landgrave did not interfere any more with Elizabeth's way of life. He let Elizabeth go her own way, and they lived a much happier life than before.

"Oh, thank you, Horvát *néni*," said Erzsi Berkó. "I just love to hear the story of my patron saint. You know I am named for her. I always tremble when I think how her heart must have been beating with fear when that wicked Landgrave shook her by the arm and when he looked into the basket."

"You know, Horvát *néni*," said Marcsa Bordás, "in our primer in school we read about St. Elizabeth of Hungary. And the teacher told us that our greatest composer of music, Ferenc Liszt, has written a beautiful piece about St. Elizabeth."

"Yes, and you remember, Marcsa, teacher said that piece



“NOT BREAD I AM CARRYING BUT ROSES”

of music is played all over the world," added Terka, who had gone to school with Marcsa.

While the girls continued to discuss the story, the hostess had left the room and returned with a glass of warm wine, sweetened and spiced with clove.

"Partake of it, Horvát *néni*," she said, "you have deserved it. Your throat must be dry. The others must wait until the boys turn up."

Horvát *néni* had pushed her chair back, leaving the center of the room for the next story-teller.

"Who is going to tell us another story?" asked Marcsa. "Let's hear Boris," called several of the young girls. "Last year she told a story we all liked so well."

"Boris, do tell us again of the King and the Clever Girl," begged bright-eyed little Rozál.

Boris stopped spinning. "Oh, you little goose," she said to her friend. "You don't want me to tell the same story I told last year."

"Yes, I do. I do indeed," answered Rozál.

"What does it matter that you told it last year? You know, if it's a nice story we like to hear it over and over again," said Panni.

"Didn't you just enjoy St. Elizabeth's legend?" asked serious Erzsi Berkó. "Do we ever get tired of hearing of her?"

Boris saw the point, and after a little more urging she pushed her chair toward the center of the room, and as requested told the story of "The Clever Girl and the King."



The clever girl and the king

ON THE banks of the Szamos, in the midst of tall old willow trees there was once a famous mill.

It was famous for many things. Famous for the particularly rhythmic sound of its grinding wheels, for the honesty of the miller, for the cheerfulness of the miller's son, and for the exquisite cooking of the miller's wife, who baked better *pogácsas* than anyone in six countries, nine counties, and thirteen villages.

But beyond all, it was famous for the miller's daughter. Erzsi was very beautiful. But her fame, which reached beyond the boundaries of seven lands, was even more due to her amazing cleverness than to her beauty.

One day the King heard of the clever girl. He sent her the

message that he had a bundle of hundred-year-old hemp in his attic and wanted her to spin silk thread of it.

Erzsi sent back word that her father had a hundred-year-old wooden fence. "Tell the King to make a golden spindle of it. On the golden spindle made of the hundred-year-old wooden fence I will be glad to spin silken thread of the hundred-year-old hemp the King keeps in his attic," she told the King's messenger.

The King liked the answer. Next he sent word that he had an old mug in the attic. The mug had a hole and he wanted her to mend it. "Oh, that's easy," retorted Erzsi, her eyes twinkling with mischief. "Just tell the King to turn the mug inside out and I will gladly mend it. Of course, everybody knows that mending is never done on the right side."

The King liked this answer even better than the first, and he sent a third message. "Tell Erzsi to go to the royal palace, yet not to go; to greet me when she appears before me, yet not to greet me; to bring me a present, yet not to bring one."

The messenger thought the King was too hard on clever Erzsi. He couldn't imagine that she could outwit the King again.

When Erzsi heard the King's message, she borrowed her father's donkey and rode on it to the royal palace. Before she left home she had caught a pigeon, covered it with a sieve and took it to the royal palace.

When she was led to the King, she bowed but did not

utter a word of greeting. So she saluted the King yet did not greet him. Then she lifted the sieve from the pigeon and let the bird fly away. So she had brought the King a present yet not brought one. And she had gone to the royal palace yet not gone but ridden on a donkey. So she had fulfilled all three of the King's demands.

The King was enchanted by the girl's cleverness and immediately asked her to marry him.

Erzsi thought awhile. She first felt tempted to give him a flippant answer. But she knew him to be not only a good king, but a good man. So she consented to become his wife and the Queen of his people.

The King knighted his father-in-law, the miller, and made Erzsi's brother Jancsi a lord. To his mother-in-law he gave the most beautiful pearls and diamonds whenever she sent him a batch of *pogácsas* she had baked with her own hands.

There was never a more beautiful, more kind-hearted, and more clever queen in the world than the miller's daughter Erzsi. Her husband, the King, consulted her in everything he did, and together they ruled over the most contented people, as happy rulers of a happy people.

"My, how I would love to taste those *pogácsas*," said greedy little Zsuzsi.

"I would rather like to know what the secret of her baking was," said Anna *néni*, who was a famous cook herself.

"But we haven't praised Boris for the story," said gen-

erous Bordás *néni*. "You certainly told it well, my dove," she said, embracing and kissing Boris.

While the spinning crowd praised the daughter of the house, Mama Kerekes had disappeared.

Fragrant scents wafted from the kitchen into the guest room, heralding the huge plate of baked apples which soon appeared.

"*Hé*, your mother-in-law will be very fond of you," the young girls greeted Bandi Kerekes, who arrived home the very moment when the food was brought in.

"Well, she will be exceedingly fond of me, because I usually arrive home the moment a meal happens to be served," he retorted laughingly.

"Oh, I think you are a greedy creature and the smell of the food just reaches your nose to fetch you home in time for meals," teased Marcsa.

A great stamping in front of the house announced the arrival of the men folk. Bandi said: "Such is my luck! Here they are! All of them, just when I thought to be the cock in the basket, to be petted and spoiled by you girls while I was the only fellow around."

A group of lads burst into the room, which became dangerously crowded.

Mrs. Kerekes clapped her hands, and when she could make herself heard above the chatter she said:

"We are through with the spinning for the evening! Let's set away our distaffs and spinning wheels, and then, *hajrá*, see to the food!"

By that time both rooms, as well as the kitchen, were pretty crowded. Hot spiced wine, baked apples, poppy-seed cakes and *tepertős pogácsa* made the round and disappeared with lightning speed. The older men lighted their pipes and held all the seats on the oven benches.

But the women and the younger men didn't grudge them the warmest and most comfortable places. Everyone was happy and content and looked forward to further pleasures. They had not to wait long. Great clapping came from the guest room.

"Aha!" said old Béni bácsi, slowly stroking his waxed moustache. Jóska has brought his accordion, the girls go wild."

"Uhum," nodded András Kerekes, emitting a veritable cloud of smoke. "And my Gyuri is sure to join him with his flute. The boy plays well, even if I say so, his father. He could play for the King, so well does he blow it."

The conversation of the old men was drowned in the noise from the guest room where the young boys and girls had started a *csárdás* to the vigorous tunes played on the accordion and the flute.

"Let's roast some popcorn while the youngsters dance," suggested András Kerekes, the host.

A lamp was lighted, and the huge corn-popping sieve brought out from the woodshed. Several of the older guests volunteered their services. They built a log fire in the yard, and soon the delicious fragrance of freshly popping corn

drifted into the kitchen. The yard was illuminated by the fire, and gay sparks popped into the air.

The popping corn swelled into snowy little crinkled balls with yellow hearts like daisies. Huge earthen basins were filled with the delicious popped corn and carried quickly into the house. The favorite dessert triumphed over music and dance. The young boys and girls rushed toward the fragrant dishes and dug into the snowy piles of popcorn. Everyone grabbed as much as his hands could hold. They stuffed themselves unceremoniously, and the crunching of the hard kernel in the center of the little white corn-balls replaced the music. Dish after dish was brought in from the yard.

The guests spread all over the family room, the kitchen and the guest room and everyone was busy eating popcorn for quite a while. But at last they had their fill and Jóska started again to play his accordion. Gyuri too set to playing the flute. But this time they didn't play for the feet. They played for the throats.

So gay was the party that they had to sing very, very sad songs. That's what the Hungarians always do. When they are very merry, they burst out into the saddest, most tearful songs, of great heroes of liberty, of Rákóczy and Bercsényi in exile, and of unhappy maidens and suffering lads.

But as sun follows after every rainfall, so lively and happy songs are bound to follow the sad tunes the Magyars sing in their happiest hours.

Everyone joined in the singing and kept at it until old Borbála *néni* pulled the sleeve of the host and asked him the time.

"Good gracious," she exclaimed, "it's terribly late. We must break up the party and get home."

*"Nem, nem, nem.
 Nem, nem, nem.
 Nem megyünk mi innen el,
 Nem megyünk mi,
 Nem megyünk mi:
 'Mig a gazda ki nem ver.'"*

The young girls and boys had broken out into this chorus, signifying that they won't, they won't, they really won't leave until the host will throw them out.

Uncle Kerekes, rather tired and longing for his bed, made mock gestures of throwing some of the lads out, and the youngsters were generous enough to recognize that it was time to depart.

"Next week I want you to spin in my house," said Mrs. Bordás, going round from girl to girl. "And you boys, too, are welcome."

"I'll come," said impudent Jóska, folding his accordion, "if you promise us an *almás rétes*."

"*Ejnye!* Look at him!" said Mrs. Bordás slapping the lad mockingly. "He doesn't sell himself cheap. An *almás rétes* is his price. Well, I will sleep over it, and maybe there will grow some *almás rétes* on my apple tree in the yard."

Meanwhile the guests had got into their *szürs* and shawls.

Spindles, distaffs, hemp and flax, long pipes, heavy gnarly sticks filled the hands of the departing guests.

"*Jó éjszakát*, good-night," was said in young voices and old ones, whispered and shouted.

"*Jó éjszakát*, good-night!" died down as the guests dispersed, and soon no other sound was heard in the village but the barking of some dogs and the resounding steps of the night watchman. With a lantern in his hand the night watchman paced the silent streets, fighting off sleep, and longing for dawn and his downy bed at home.



KING MATHIAS was an eccentric man. He collected many things. Things that other kings or rich people too would collect. But he also collected things that nobody else ever thought of collecting. He assembled at his court the most interesting people in the world of science, literature, painting, sculpture, music, and story-telling. But he liked also freaks and cranks to live around his court.

. In his collection of human curios he had among other strange specimens the laziest men in the world.

The King's friends were always on the lookout for curiosities for Mathias' pleasure. Quite a number of extremely lazy men enjoyed the idleness at the court of King Mathias, and the very laziest three of them lived in a house the King had especially designated to them. There they spent their lives sleeping and eating.

One day fire broke out in the house where the three laziest men lived. As usual, they slept. The heat and the noise of the fire waked them, and the first man said drowsily:

"The house is burning."

"What does it matter?" said the second man indolently, with half a snore, not even opening an eye.

"Why speak about it at all?" drowsed the third man.

And all three of them turned heavily in their beds, pulled the blankets over their heads, and fell immediately asleep again.

They burned and their lazy ashes mingled with the tinder of the house.

Nobody felt the world poorer with their death. All the difference their death meant was that King Mathias promoted another of the crowd of lazy men to the title of the "laziest man in the world."

This new champion of laziness was more inert than any lazy man King Mathias had ever watched before. The man was even too lazy to chew his food. He swallowed bits and was happiest when fed with pap, like a toothless baby.

One day, however, he had to sit up at one of the King's state banquets and keep himself awake. It was a gorgeous banquet. Hundreds of brilliantly attired men and women, the richest and most tempting food, dainty, desserts, sparkling wines and flowers, crystal, silver in abundance.

The King's dinner orchestra played lovely tunes. Soft melodies and lively *csárdás* that made it hard to sit still.

Of course, they stirred all the others at the royal table but left the laziest man in his lethargy.

First, he had a hard time to keep his eyes open. After the soup he dozed off and didn't hear his neighbor speaking to him.

A lackey in gorgeous livery touched his shoulder, and he woke to the sound of a silvery peal of laughter. He looked to his right and saw a charming young girl in uncontrollable laughter.

When the girl saw her somnambulant dinner partner waken she tried to stop laughing. But he looked so sheepish in his effort to keep his eyes open that she simply could not stop.

Her neighbor looked sulkily at her, and the young girl felt a little ashamed of her mocking laughter.

By and by they started a conversation; but the lazy man continued to doze off and wake with jerky movements. The girl was glad when the banquet came to an end.

After the feast the lazy man fell into his bed like a log. But a strange thing happened to him. His eyes closed and his mind was off in dreamland, yet he did not really sleep.

The room was dark, and there was not a soul in the house, yet he saw light and heard sounds. The sound of a silvery peal of laughter. He pulled the blanket over his head, yet the silvery laughter was as audible as before.

The lazy man turned from one side to the other, but in vain. There was the laughter.

For the first time in his lazy life he became awake. And

as the hours passed he became more and more awake. In fact, he did not sleep a wink that night.

In the morning he asked to see the King.

"Well, friend, what's the matter?" King Mathias asked with a broad smile. He never could look at the lazy man without smiling.

"Your Majesty, I don't know what the matter is, but I couldn't sleep a wink last night."

"Now, that's serious," said the King. "There must be some real trouble, you'd better see the court physician. By the way, was there anything else unusual?"

"Well, yes, Your Majesty, I heard noises all night."

"*Ejnye, ejnye*," said the King in mock compassion. "You certainly are sick. What kind of noises did you hear?"

"I—well—I—er—I heard something like—laughter. Like the girl's—laughter who sat on my right side at the banquet."

"Oh, that's it!" exclaimed the King. "My friend, you are in love, nothing else is the matter with you."

King Mathias laughed. The idea of the lazy man in love was very funny.

But it was not funny at all to the lazy man himself. Dim down in his always vague mind he had a very vague notion that being in love was not a restful thing. He hated the idea of being a victim of that disturbing emotion.

He morosely withdrew and went straight to bed again. He was not to be disturbed in his perfect idleness by anything so foolish as being in love.

The blinds were down on his windows, the room was pitch dark, yet he again sensed light, and he also heard again the silvery laughter.

The lazy man tossed in his bed, but sleep shunned him and he began to suffer. Many days passed. He hardly slept, and food, even the softest pap, became repulsive to him.

One day he asked again to see the King.

"Well, how are you, my friend?" the King asked.

"Your Majesty, I am worse, and I am afraid you were right when you said I was in love. I come for your advice. What shall I do to be cured of that malady, Your Majesty?"

"There is only one cure, my friend," said the King. "Go to the girl and ask her to marry you."

The lazy man groaned. The idea did not appeal to him at all. He did not know much of married life, but he felt it could not be as beatifically reposeful as the idle life of "the laziest man" at King Mathias' court.

The King read the thoughts the lazy man was too inert to express.

"I can't help it, my friend. I know there is no other cure for you but to ask the girl to marry you."

A deep sigh was the lazy man's answer as he retired from the King's presence.

He shuffled to the girl and asked her to marry him. The girl broke out in the silvery laughter so painfully familiar to him. She laughed exactly as he had heard her during those agonizingly sleepless nights.

"I am sorry," the girl said after the attack of mirth. "I am sorry indeed," she said, "but I can't marry you."

"Why not?" he asked, choosing lazily the shortest words.

"Oh, well," the girl hesitated, "well, I can't marry you because you are the laziest man in the world. I cannot marry you."

"Well, that's all," thought the lazy man and went home and straight to bed. But there was the light in the dark room, and the silvery peals of laughter in the stillness of the empty house. After a few more sleepless nights he appeared again before the King.

"Well, my friend, are you happily betrothed and recovering your spirits?"

"No, Your Majesty," said the lazy man abjectly. "The girl refused me, and I am more sleepless than ever, and I hardly can swallow food."

"Now, now, that sounds bad. Why did she refuse you?"

"She said she couldn't marry the laziest man in the world. What am I now to do?"

King Mathias looked at the champion of laziness with a new expression. After a little speculation he said:

"I think I know what you must do. You must win the girl——"

"Of course, I must," broke in the lazy man with unusual energy.

The King looked surprised, then continued:

"I know how you can win the girl."

"How, Your Majesty?" the lazy man asked.

"You must catch a hare alive."

"A hare alive?" echoed the lazy man.

"Yes, you must catch a hare with your own hands. When you take the hare alive to the girl she will agree to become your wife."

"I must catch a hare alive with my own hands and take it to the girl and then she will consent to marry me." The lazy man spoke to himself, as if the King were not present at all. When he was through with his monologue the King said emphatically:

"I, the King, guarantee that the girl will marry you if you bring her a live hare you caught with your own hands."

The lazy man went home and straight to bed. He wanted to try for the last time whether he could not continue the life of the champion lazy man. He hated to bother with live hares and matrimony.

But sleep did not come, and in addition to hearing the silvery laugh he now also saw hares running around.

After a few days he knew there was no escape. He had to start catching a hare.

Well, that was no easy job!

The poor lazy man puffed around in meadows and woods until he caught sight of a hare. He walked up to it, but the nimble animal was miles away before the lazy man had made up his mind to pursue it. There was no lying around in his bed any more for him. He was on his feet all the hours of the day and slept profoundly at nights. But not more than nights.



HE HAD TO START CATCHING A HARE

Days passed and weeks, months and months. Our lazy man who used to shuffle along at the short walks between his home and the royal palace now learned to walk, then to trot, and even to run.

And by the end of a year there was no faster runner in King Mathias' empire than his champion lazy man. But of course by that time he had lost the championship of laziness. And the hares in the country cursed their fate. They had no rest because the King's lazy man was after them all the time.

It was exactly a year from the time that he had started pursuing hares when he succeeded in catching one with his bare hands.

He hurried to the young lady, and, putting the hare into her hands, he repeated his proposal.

The young girl couldn't believe her eyes. The lazy, fat man had grown thin and trim, his eyes sparkled and shone, and his cheeks had bronzed in the sun and air.

She gladly consented to marry him, and there was no happier pair in all Hungary than the King's former laziest man and his lovely bride.

King Mathias made him his champion runner and employed him as his personal courier, and his young wife became lady-in-waiting to Queen Beatrice, the wife of King Mathias.



LUCK and Blessing were always quarreling with each other. Each claimed that it was he who did most good to people. They told each other of their deeds but could never agree as to whose acts caused more happiness.

One day they were quarreling as usual when a poor man passed them. He was a very poor man, who lived from hand to mouth, never making more money than he needed for the day, and at that never enough for the day. He made brooms of birch twigs and took them to the market. There he sold his brooms at any price people were willing to pay, and that was very little indeed.

As the poor man approached the quarreling couple Blessing said to Luck:

"You see this poor man? I am going to show you that he will not need to peddle brooms any more for a wretched living. I will help him to something better."

When the poor man reached them, Blessing stopped him and said:

"Here, my good man, are a hundred florins. Use them to start something that will yield a better living than your brooms."

The poor man was overwhelmed with gratitude and thanked Blessing profusely for the generous gift. Then he went to town, sold his brooms at the market, and went home. He thought how glad his wife would be at the good news that he had a hundred florins to start a more profitable job. To his disappointment his wife was not at home when he arrived. He played a long while with his money, but finally got impatient waiting for her.

"Well, anyway I have to fetch wood from the forest for my wife," he thought. "I'd better not wait any longer."

He looked all over their poor home for a place to hide the money, but their home was so bare that he could not find anything safer than the bran box in the cellar. He carefully stuck the hundred florins into the bran and went on his way.

But he had hardly left the house when his wife returned. She looked all over her cupboard for something to cook and didn't find a single thing. She was hungry and knew her husband would be hungry when he came home. In her despair, she thought she might sell some of their bran and for the money get something to eat.

She went down to the cellar and took out a pailful of bran. The poor man's wife sold the bran to a neighboring weaver and bought corn meal for the money. She cooked a dish of corn mush for dinner.

When the man came home his wife called him to dinner, but he first went down into the cellar to fetch his money.

He thrust his hands into the bran box but didn't find his money. He called out to his wife:

"*Hé*, woman! I had a hundred florins in the bran box and don't find them now. What did you do with the money?"

The poor woman laughed. "You poor idiot! Have you gone crazy? All your family up and down haven't had a hundred florins in all their lives!"

"Why, woman! You are this and that," fumed the enraged man. "If none of my family ever had a hundred florins, I had—you—you——" He nearly choked with rage. When he caught his breath again, he told his wife that a kind stranger had given him a hundred florins and he had hidden them in the bran box.

The woman was overcome with grief. "But," she said, "if the money was in the bran box, it must be at the weaver's to whom I sold a pailful of bran."

They ran over to the neighbor and asked him to return their hundred florins.

"You are crazy," said the weaver contemptuously. "In all your born lives you haven't seen a hundred florins. Get out of here, or I shall throw you out."

In vain did they plead with the man, in vain threaten him, he chased them out without returning their money.

The poor couple were desperate. They pondered and wondered, and finally the man said:

"There is nothing we can do. For once I had a hundred florins and they are gone."

He went out in the woods, cut some birch twigs, and bound them into brooms.

Next morning he carried his brooms again to town.

Blessing and Luck stood in the same place where the poor man had met them the day before. Luck saw him first and teasingly said to Blessing:

"Here you have your poor man, selling brooms again, friend Blessing. You see your hundred florins didn't help him."

Blessing was disgusted. He shouted angrily at the poor man: "Haven't I given you the money to start something better than selling brooms? What do you mean coming again to market with your brooms?"

"Oh, sir, don't be angry with me. I had no luck with the hundred florins."

"Ha-ha!" laughed Luck. "He had no luck!"

"Well," said Blessing reluctantly, "I will give you another hundred florins. But now I really don't want to see you any more peddling brooms!"

The poor man was overjoyed. He thanked the stranger for his generosity and right there threw the brooms away. Then he ran home as fast as he could. His wife was again absent.

Finding no better place the poor man hid the money in the ash can and went into the forest to fetch wood.

While he was away his wife returned and was astonished not to find her husband. She wanted to cook dinner but found her cupboard empty. As empty as a stupid man's head.

Hoping her husband would bring money from the sale of the brooms she waited awhile, but finally grew impatient and looked out for something to sell and to buy food for the money.

But they were so poor there was nothing she could sell. Then she remembered that the tanner at the end of the village bought ashes for his work. So she grabbed her ash can and ran over to the tanner and sold him the ash. She bought corn meal, and by the time her husband came home from the forest the corn mush was steaming on the table.

The poor man did not sit down to the table. He first looked for the ash can. But there was no ash can. Not a trace of it!

"*Hé*, wife!" shouted the man, "where is the ash?"

"Here, in the middle of the table," answered the woman.

"Where?" asked the man.

"On the table, in that dish," said she, pointing to the steaming corn mush.

"What do you mean?" he shouted. "I asked where the ash was."

"Exactly," answered his wife calmly. "Be grateful that I know how to change the ash into corn mush. You couldn't

have eaten ash, but you can fill yourself with corn mush. The tanner has good use for the ash——”

She could not finish the sentence. Her husband leaped at her furiously.

“What did you do with the hundred florins?”

“Oh, go on, you are crazy,” said the woman. “Don’t you fool me any more.”

“Fool you! You—you——” he gasped. “I hid fully a hundred florins in the ash, not one *krajcár* less.”

They rushed to the tanner and asked breathlessly for the hundred florins.

But the tanner was as dishonest as the weaver and chased them away from his works.

The poor couple were dejected and desperate.

“I think it is my fate to remain poor all my life,” said the man to his wife. She looked around the bare walls of their hut and did not find any words of consolation. The man went out into the woods, cut birch twigs, and made brooms as usual.

When he took his wares to town next day Blessing and Luck were standing again on the same spot.

“Look here, Friend Blessing,” cried Luck, “here is your poor man again with brooms on his back.”

Blessing went purple with rage. He shouted at the top of his voice at the poor man:

“You scoundrel, you infamous scoundrel, what did I tell you? What did you do with the hundred florins?”

“Oh, generous and kind sir, don’t be angry! I can’t help it, but I have no luck.”

"Well, poor man," now said Luck, "don't worry. Hereafter you shall have luck. Here is a *krajcár*. It isn't much, just the hundreth of one florin, but it is enough because you will have luck with it."

The poor man thanked Luck for the *krajcár* and then went to town to sell his brooms. He bought some corn meal, and to please his wife he bought three walnuts with the *krajcár* Luck had given him.

Then he went homeward. As he was going along he saw three children quarreling about some shiny stone. They wrangled and cuffed and puffed each other, each wanting to get hold of the stone.

"What are you doing?" he asked the children.

"Well, uncle," said one of the boys. "I saw the shiny stone first, and they won't let me have it."

"It's not true," said the second boy. "It was I who saw the stone first."

"No, I saw it first," said the third boy.

"Oh, don't you quarrel over such trash. Here, I give you each a walnut and you give me the stone."

All three boys liked walnuts, so they were glad with the bargain.

The poor man took the stone home and put it down on the table. When dusk set in the stone became luminous and shed such a brilliant light that it nearly blinded the amazed couple.

They wondered and puzzled about the marvelous stone, when a rich man entered their hut.



"I GIVE YOU EACH A WALNUT AND YOU GIVE ME
THE STONE"

"What causes this intense light?" he asked.

"It's the stone, if you please, sir."

"Well, friend," said the Squire, "I will buy this stone from you."

"What will you give me for it?"

"I will give you a pailful of silver."

The poor man scratched his head and speculated: "If the Squire offers me at first sight a pailful of silver, the stone must be worth a good deal more."

"Oh, I won't sell it for so little," he answered at last. "That's a very valuable stone."

"Well, I will give you two pailfuls of silver," offered the Squire.

"Sorry, I can't do it," said the poor man.

"Well, I will give you three pailfuls of silver."

The poor man didn't know what to do. He didn't dare to hold out for more, yet was afraid to miss the opportunity of getting more. He asked the woman:

"What do you think, wife, should I sell the stone for three pailfuls of silver?"

The woman thought it best not to risk the sale by holding out for more. "If you don't mind, I am willing to sell it for three pailfuls of silver," she said.

The Squire had just come from the market where he had made a lot of money. He had a carriage full of silver at the door and immediately measured out three pailfuls of it.

The poor man handed him the stone, which was an immense diamond of the clearest water.

The poor man and his wife now had enough money to buy a splendid farm, oxen, horses, cows, sheep, and everything they needed. He certainly didn't need to peddle brooms any more. He became a squire himself. The formerly poor couple were lucky with everything they did. Right after the first harvest the new squire took six carloads of wheat to the market where he used to peddle brooms. To each of the six cars he had harnessed six oxen, and he himself followed the loads of wheat, riding on a beautiful white horse.

Blessing and Luck stood again at the place where our friend used to meet them.

It was again Luck who saw him first.

"Do you see that gentleman, Friend Blessing?" he asked.

"Of course I see him. How could I help it? He is conspicuous enough on his white horse."

"Well, do you know him?"

"How could I? I have never seen him before."

"Never, indeed!" said Luck triumphantly.

"It is your poor besom peddler. You see what my mere *krajcár* did for him?"

Blessing felt ashamed and said ruefully to his companion:

"You were right, friend Luck, blessing without luck isn't worth much."



AMONG the peaked mountains of lovely Torna there is one particularly famous elevation. In its wooded slope is hidden a cave from the dark corners of which sonorous sounds reverberate.

The hollow rocks seem to be filled with their own music, as the sounds ring from one wall to the other.

The hillside around the resonant cave was once, long, long ago, the place of a romance. When the good people of Torna get together for corn-husking or a spinning feast or for any of the occasions when stories are told, the old romance is sure to be one of the legends the young people will clamor for, because they never tire of hearing the story of lovely Juliska.

Ages and ages ago, one mellow autumn day, a lovely maiden went with her basket into the woods to gather the

last berries ripening on bushes of many-colored foliage. The young girl sang softly as she went along, picking here a berry for her basket and there one for her own berrylike red-lipped mouth. She sang sad melodies and gay tunes as the Hungarians like to do, and skipped from bush to bush where they invited her with tempting ripe fruit.

Climbing higher and higher on the mountain side, Juliska stopped with a cry of delight before a bush clustered with deep-red, fully ripened berries. When she reached out to pick them a voice coming from nowhere startled her: "Pretty little girl, are the berries ripe?" asked the mysterious voice. Juliska dropped the basket. The berries she had previously picked rolled all around her while she was scanning the scene for the source of the voice.

She looked up and down and to both sides. She looked up to the sky, but there was nobody visible. The scene was quiet and not a soul around. There were trees and bushes and grass and rocks, but not a living soul. Yet the voice asked again:

"Pretty little girl, are the berries ripe?"

Juliska did not know what to think. But before she could move a kindly looking man stepped out of the cave. The entrance was hidden behind the rich foliage of the bushes, from which Juliska had been about to pick the ripe berries.

"Are the berries ripe, good girl?" the kind-looking man asked her again. A friendly smile lighted his serious face.

"They are, sir," answered Juliska, picking up her empty basket. "They are, and I will be glad to pick some for you; I know how to reach for them between the thorns."

The kind-faced serious man followed Juliska as she mounted higher and higher searching for berries. On the top of the mountain they sat down for a rest.

"I heard your sweet voice, good girl," said the stranger. "Won't you sing for me one of your sad and one of your gay songs?"

"Gladly, good stranger. But if you don't mind I should like to fill my basket with berries before it grows dark. Won't you hold the basket while I pick the fruit?"

The kind-faced, serious man held the basket, and Juliska sang for him while she moved from bush to bush gathering the last fruits.

The tinkling sound of the evening bells came faintly up from the valley. It was hardly more than a noiseless sound, but enough to remind Juliska that she should turn home before darkness fell.

She took her basket, drew her gay handkerchief closer around her curly head, and took leave of the friendly stranger.

The mysterious stranger thanked her warmly for the berries she had picked for his delectation and the melodies she had sung for his pleasure. Drawing a beautiful ring from his pocket he put it on Juliska's finger and said: "Take this ring, good girl, and take good care of it. It might bring you help if you are in trouble and give you happiness. Take good care of it."

Young Juliska thanked the mysterious stranger for his gift and light-heartedly started home. With winged feet

did she hurry, anxious to show the gift of the stranger to her sweetheart whom she loved with all her heart and soul. But what was her amazement when Jóska answered her radiant greeting with a savage scowl. Juliska had extended her hand with the sparkling ring in joyous greeting, but Jóska seized the hand as if it were leprous.

"Who gave you the precious ring?" he hissed viciously. "You faithless—you deceitful——"

The startled girl looked horrified at her beloved Jóska. The boy, however, was in such a frenzy of jealousy that he would not listen to Juliska's explanation. He tore himself away and flung insults at her. Poor Juliska thought she must die at her sweetheart's savage outbreak. In vain did she try to speak. Jóska continued pouring out insulting accusations like a torrent.

"You false creature, the sparkling ring speaks more truthfully than your deceitful tongue. I leave you to be happy with your new sweetheart. I leave you—you will never see me again." Jóska started to leave her, but Juliska, with the strength of her hurt pride, caught hold of his sleeve.

"Stop and listen to me!" she cried. "I have loved you dearly and love you still, though you have cut my heart. "See——" she said, and with a swift gesture drew the ring from her finger and flung it into a near-by well.

The diamond glittered brilliantly as the ring flew high up into the air before dropping into the well.

But jealousy had gripped the unreasonable Jóska. He

sulkily looked at the unhappy girl and started again to leave her.

Juliska's pride filled the slender young girl with mature dignity. "I won't let you go with the cruel thoughts in your mind and the injustice in your heart."

"Follow me!" Juliska commanded. And against his will under the force of her injured love the young man followed Juliska. She did not speak to him. In sad silence she led him through the quiet landscape to the bushes behind which the cave was hidden.

Into its dark hollow the proud young girl called:

"Kind stranger who gave me the ring, come and help me!"

At her appeal the man appeared. Kind-faced and serious he looked, questioning.

"Your ring, O stranger, has brought me no luck. It has made me very unhappy. Very unhappy indeed! My sweetheart suspects me. He has lost faith in me and accuses me of having accepted a gift from another sweetheart. He is breaking my heart, and I want him to know how cruelly he is wronging me."

The gentle-faced, serious man smiled at the unhappy young pair. He took the boy's and the girl's hand and started with them toward the near-by village. With kindly words he scolded the young lover for his mistrust in lovely Juliska, and by the time they arrived at the village Jóska realized the mistake he had made in his fit of jealousy.

But what was the astonishment of Juliska and Jóska

when they saw young and old courtesying to the mysterious stranger. The people bowed respectfully as the stranger passed them holding Juliska's hand with his right and Jóska's with his left hand.

"You silly boy," King Béla said to Jóska. "Be careful not to hurt this lovely girl with rash accusations. She has been faithful to you, and you should be humbly grateful for her love. I will ask her to forget how you hurt her pride and to forgive you for once."

The King then turned to Juliska: "And you, good girl, were also rash throwing the ring your king gave you in a passion into the well. Hadn't I told you to take good care of it?"

"Now, my children, you will forgive and forget and be happy in mutual love and trust."

The King knighted Jóska, and Juliska realized that the King's ring had brought her luck and happiness, as he had said when he presented it to her.

Juliska and Jóska married and lived happily ever after, loving and trusting each other all their lives.

And the berries around the resonant cave are to-day as fragrant and delicious as they were ages ago when lovely Juliska picked them for King Béla, the kind-faced, serious stranger.



"YOUR RING, O STRANGER, HAS BROUGHT ME NO LUCK"



AT THE foot of the wood-covered triple peaks of the Magura Mountains there was once a proud castle. Its citadel stood high above the fortress which surrounded the castle proper. Mysterious groves, crystal lakes, forests, and woods belonged to it.

Innumerable stories are woven around the Somlyó Vár.

To this day the simple people of Szilágy-Somlyó point with a pleasant shudder to a cave in the hillside where in the days of the Somlyó Vár a fierce dragon kept the population in terror until he was slain by the first holder of the castle.

And on Sundays the good people will picnic on the border of a beautiful clear lake. Pokoltó is a tiny lake, yet an interesting one. It is supposed to be bottomless, and, as in ancient times, people to this day believe that anyone falling

into the lake will sink and sink deep, deep, deep down and arrive 'way down in hell.

The castle itself does not exist any more; it has long ago crumbled. But the stories connected with it survived the Somlyó Vár.

Long, long ago, when it stood in its full glory, one day the guard in the turret saw a Turkish host approaching toward the castle. He hastened to report the danger to Captain Somogyi who was in command of the fortress.

The captain was taken aback by the news and asked anxiously:

"Are you sure the Turks are advancing on us?"

"As sure as I see the sword on your side, my captain!"

"Can't there be a mistake? Have you seen right?"

"As right as I see your nose on your face, my captain!"

"Well, what shall we do?" said the Captain in great worry. "We are a mere handful, how can we defend the fortress against an army?"

"Let's draw up the bridge," suggested one of the Captain's aides.

"Much good would that do," said the Captain desperately.

Gábor Koczka, the drummer, stepped forward. "How many men may be marching on us?" he asked the guard.

"There may be around four hundred Turks," said the guard.

"Well, that's nothing. Mere child's play! I myself can drive them away single handed."

The Captain and the others looked at Koczka, as if they thought he had lost his mind.

Koczka reached for his drum and leisurely strolled out of the fortress. He went down into the valley and began to beat his drum with all his might. The surrounding mountains echoed the beats of the drum a thousandfold.

The Turks advancing from the other side of the mountain heard the deafening noise and thought the Somlyó Vár forces must be immense, must have more drummers than their army had soldiers. The crashing noise continued to reverberate from the other side of the mountain.

The Turks didn't waste much time on speculation.

Their commander ordered retreat, and quick retreat at that!

Koczka, the lone drummer, lustily beat his drum, the mountains forcefully echoed the noise, and the Turks took to their heels as fast as they could. They ran and ran, and if they did not stop somewhere, they still must be running.



Corn husking

BRR!" said András *bácsi*, shaking the snow from his huge sheepskin coat in front of the Balázs house. It was a real winter night. No joke about it.

It had come ahead of time, before snow was due. The surprised villagers had to hustle with the fall work. Much of the corn was lying in the barns waiting for the husking.

Corn-husking is a labor of love. The village would be ashamed if a *gazda* had to hire help to husk the corn. And corn-husking is also one of the most pleasant occasions for general merrymaking. Nobody ever gets tired of it.

For three days snow had been falling as if all the pillows in heaven had burst while shaken in a violent spring cleaning.

Snow, snow, hard, crisp flakes, mounting into walls between which white narrow paths were shoveled.

The whole village looked forward to the evening, because the word had gone round that the Balázs' were preparing for the corn-husking.

At such occasions no invitations are issued. Everyone knows that everybody is welcome.

And Balázs *bácsi* was so popular for his good wine, his wife, the crisp and trim Kati Levenye, so famous for her *pogácsas*, the like no other woman in the village could bake, and the Balázs boys and girls such favorites among the village youth that nobody would stay home. Not even if it rained cats and dogs.

But it was not cats and dogs, it was crystalline, sparkling snow that fell from a soft gray sky.

People arrived snow-covered, their breath streaming in clouds from their nostrils. Cheeks glowed and eyes sparkled with anticipation of the evening's pleasures.

There was a stamping of feet, a shaking of lambskin *szürs*. The women folk unwound the shawls from their heads to shake the snow off. Everyone talked. The children ran between their elders' feet and timid infants held fast to their mothers' aprons, sucking the thumbs of their free hands.

The young boys and girls giggled and grinned. The matrons set their embroidered aprons straight, and everything was as pleasant as could be.

The people poured into the huge barn, the upper part

of which was filled with the fall corn waiting for the busy husking hands.

There were all the friends and neighbors and relatives of the Balázs, ready to do the work of love. It meant that practically all the village was there, because those who were not relatives or neighbors were friends of the family.

Balázs *néni* went around between her guests and did everything to make them comfortable. In the midst of the general noise someone shouted: "Uncle Tamás is here! Tamás *bácsi* has arrived!"

Everyone seemed particularly pleased to see the old man, who walked with great dignity into the barn.

The ice-gray moustaches were well waxed and stuck far out from his face. Waxed and rolled hard to a needle point, this moustache was the pride of the village. As to that, Tamás *bácsi*, the whole of him, was the pride of the village. He was their pride because he was the best story-teller of this part of the country. Not in three counties could you find a better story-teller, nor even his equal.

As Tamás *bácsi* stopped with modestly hidden pride in the middle of the barn, the people settled more firmly on the benches and low stools. Even children sat down on the floor at the feet of their parents, knowing that the spirit of corn-husking had arrived.

Because story-telling is the soul of that feast. Other pleasures go with it. Food and wine, and singing and dancing and some gypsy music. But delightful as all that is, nothing equals the pleasure of story-telling.

"Come, Uncle Tamás," said Balázs, the master of the house, to the old man. He led him to a place where all the crowd could see him. And everyone wants to see a storyteller, not only hear him.

"Well, Uncle Tamás, let's begin," said a pretty little brown-haired girl, sidling up to the old man.

"Well, children, why didn't you begin long ago?" said Tamás *bácsi*. In his inmost heart he knew well they would not dream of starting to tell stories before he, the king of storytellers, arrived.

"Oh, go on, Tamás *bácsi*!" said a young man, nudging him with young impudence, "you know well we wouldn't start without you! Now be good and tell us your nicest story!"

"Well, how am I to know what may be my nicest story?" said Tamás *bácsi*. A great tumult arose at this.

A dozen voices called out a dozen titles, everyone claiming his or her favorite story as "the" nicest.

Tamás *bácsi* covered his ears in mock horror. Not yet ready to yield he said: "Now, here you have it! How am I to know which is my nicest story? Did I not hear you call for a whole bunch of stories?"

And imitating the different voices he repeated the titles of stories they had asked for: "Ludas Matyi," "Chasing the Rainbow," "A Dish of Lentils," "Bluebottle and Mo-hácsi."

"Well, children, it won't be any of these. I think I will tell you to-day 'The legend of Eperjes.'"

"*Halljuk, halljuk!* Hear, hear!" shouted the chorus.
"Anything you choose, Uncle Tamás."

The old man pulled himself up. He stroked his stiff mustache—that pride of the village—filled his pipe, and took a few puffs of it before he started to tell the story.



LONG, long ago in the dim past, Hungary had a king, who was blind, stock, stark blind. Béla was the ruler of a kingdom, yet as miserable as his most miserable of subjects. The sun shone not for him, nor did he know how lovely are the stars that twinkle in the high summer sky, how white the snow that glitters on the fir trees. He felt the crown heavy on his brow, but could not enjoy the sparkle of its diamonds, its rubies, and its sapphires.

The sad king once went with his suite into the northern part of his kingdom. They rode through pathless, dark woods through virgin forests for hours that seemed to drag endlessly. The sun climbed high in the sky, and the King and his party found themselves lost in the wooded wilderness. King Béla the Blind became restless. The heat parched his

throat, and he asked for water. "I am thirsty, my cavaliers," he complained, "and so tired."

Three groups of the knights departed immediately in different directions to search for a cool spring, while the bodyguard helped the King to dismount. They placed the monarch carefully on the green lawn, in the quiet shadow of dark trees.

There he sat sightless, quietly listening to the noises of the forest, the trees, the grass, and the birds. The men around him respected the King's mood and did not break the stillness of the forest by human speech. The time passed. None of the cavaliers returned. Yet the King did not stir. He tried to distinguish the songs of the different birds. A bee full of the nectar it had sucked from fragrant flowers took rest on the King's motionless hand. As if the bee knew that the King was helpless, it did not sting him.

A faint smile curved the lips of the King as he mused about the irony of his fate.

"Here I am," he thought, "the most powerful man of my kingdom, yet helpless as a babe in arms. I am the anointed monarch of a mighty people, yet cannot make a step without stumbling. To my people I appear in the splendor of the sun, yet I am steeped in eternal darkness.

"Millions look up to me, *follow* my step. Yet an infant can *lead* my step."

The ironic smile deepened on sad King Béla's sightless face. The heat grew, and the King felt sleepy. Only the torturing thirst kept him awake.

In his restlessness King Béla tried to see the place with his hands. As blind people will do, he gently passed both hands over the grass around him and touched on both sides the coolest fruit of the woods: fragrant wild strawberries. He picked the sweet-smelling berries and moistened his thirsty lips with their delicate ripe flesh. Now he could wait more patiently for the spring water.

The sun had turned westward, by the time the first group of knights returned. Returned without water, to the bitterly disappointed King, yet with such vivid tales of the beauty of the places they had searched that the King forgot his thirst for a while.

"We rode over hills and dales, my king," said one of the chevaliers, "but did not strike a single spring."

"We cut our way through thickly tangled brush," said another of the group, "but we were not rewarded with the sight of a pool."

The knights of the first group had not finished the story of their efforts when the second group returned triumphantly bringing plenty of thirst-quenching, crystal-clear, cool water.

They had gone farther than the first group of searchers, and found water aplenty. Springs and brooks and rivulets, fountains and pools had offered their cool substance.

The King took a long, endlessly long draft from the horn in which they offered the refreshing water. After having had his fill, King Béla listened to the story of their discoveries.

"Ah, the beautiful mountain sides we passed, my lord

and king," exclaimed one of the knights, "they were fragrant with wild flowers. Tall trees protected us against the scorching rays of the sun."

And the second group had not finished reporting when merry noises, chatter, and laughter heralded the return of the third group. In search of water they had gone farthest.

The knights rushed unceremoniously up to the blind King. Disregarding each other they all started to talk at once. The captain of the King's bodyguard frowned at them. He signaled to them that their hilarity was in bad taste in view of the blind King's sad mood. With his eyes he commanded: "Be serious! Respect the King!"

But the men did not stop their hilarious chatter. To the contrary. They made more noise and grew louder.

The others didn't know what to think. At last it dawned on them that the chevaliers were tipsy with wine. They could not imagine how on earth they could have found wine in the wilderness?

"No," protested the noisy chevaliers, "we had no wine. We drank water from a clear spring. Deliciously cold crystal-clear water. Here is a sample of it."

The other knights drank, one after the other, from the big horn, and lo! soon they too grew hilarious and noisy.

At last one of them exclaimed: "That water has the flavor of wine, gentlemen! Upon my word it tastes like wine."

"You are right, you are," they responded, smacking their lips for the taste of the wine.

Meantime King Béla had followed his own thoughts. When his bodyguard respectfully hinted at moving farther, the King said with deep feeling: "Let the woodland around the place where I am sitting be cleared. And where my two hands found cool, ripe, and fragrant strawberries which moistened my parched throat, a town shall rise. And in memory of the berries that gave me such delight the town shall be called Eperjes, 'The Town of Berries.'"

And it happened as the King ordered. The virgin forest where Béla the Blind had rested was cleared. Eperjes, a well peopled, sightly town, grew in the place of the wilderness.

A deep red ripe strawberry was designed into the coat of arms of Eperjes and is in it to this day.

And the spring in the depth of the forest with the water tasting like wine was called Borkút, "Fountain of Wine." When Hungarians go to the ancient town of Eperjes they do not fail to visit the near-by Fountain of Wine. Its clear, cool water still has a touch of the taste of wine. And nowhere grow more fragrant wild strawberries than in the woods around Eperjes, the Town of Berries.

The barn had become very still toward the end of the story. The children, fascinated by the intense attention their elders paid to the story, had stopped running around. Only the faint rustling of the husks, as busy hands tore them from the cobs, and the slight thud of the cobs thrown to the heap, accompanied the end of the story.

"My, that was beautiful!" exclaimed a blue-eyed girl.

Her long blond tresses, ending in red ribbon bows, flew around her hips as she dashed up to Uncle Tamás to reward him with a kiss.

"It was beautiful," said many others.

"How I should like to visit Eperjes and drink from the Borkút," said a youngster.

"I would like to pick berries there," said little Jóska, famous for his insatiable appetite.

"Another story, please!" exclaimed a young matron whose husband had brought her from a remote village and who therefore was new to the stories of this village.

"Well, children," said Uncle Tamás, "let's take turns. Somebody else to tell now."

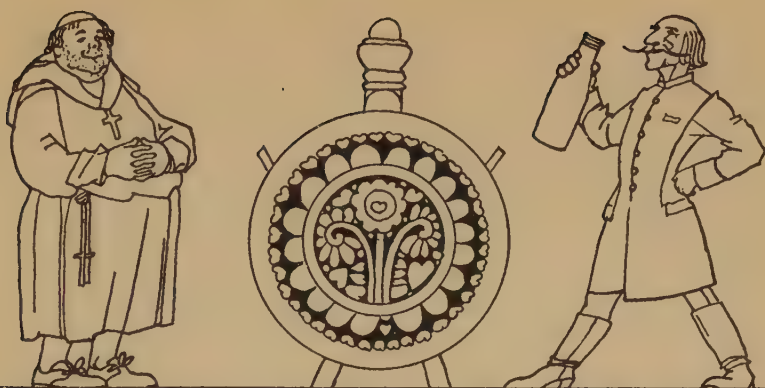
"I am willing," said young Péter Balázs, hoping to impress his sweetheart.

He walked up to Uncle Tamás and asked: "Which story should I tell?"

"Why not have Ilus choose?" said Tamás *bácsi*, looking with a twinkle in his eye at the blushing sweetheart of young Balázs.

"Yes, Ilus, do choose!" said the young man.

"Well," said the girl, "I don't mind if you tell the story of 'The pint bottle of Cinkota.'"



The pint bottle of Cinkota

THERE is a village in Hungary that has a famous inn. The inn is to this day famous for its pint, holding exactly double as much as an ordinary pint bottle.

It has had the privilege of the “large pint” for centuries, ever since it was granted by King Mathias.

The village of Cinkota had during Mathias’ time a kind old curate who was very popular with his flock. One day, digging for some document in the archives of his church he came across a yellowed old parchment. To his amazement he found that centuries ago King András II had elevated the parish into an abbacy. It seemed that soon after the elevation the Tartars had overrun the country, and in the sad confusion the change into an abbacy had not taken place.

The kind old man realized that under the ancient order he would now be an abbot. This thought took hold of him so

strongly that he grew dissatisfied with his state of simple curate.

He decided to petition the King to renew the elevation of his parish into an abbacy and enclosed the ancient document.

The petition reached King Mathias in one of his jesting moods. He wrote on the back of the petition:

The request of the petitioner to be granted if he can answer the following questions within three days: 1. Where does the sun rise? 2. How much is the King worth? 3. What does the King think?

The old curate opened the King's answer with trembling hands. But perspiration broke out on his brow when he saw the conditions on which the realization of his desire depended. How could he answer these questions, particularly within three days?

For three days and three nights the poor old curate racked his brains. He could not answer a single one of the three questions.

He had, however, a faithful cantor who was famous for his appetite and his thirst. When he saw the reverend father worrying and refusing food and drink in his worry he asked him what it was that troubled him.

The old curate told him of his discovery of the ancient order, of his petition to the King, and of Mathias' reply. "The King gave me only three days for the answer, but I know I could not answer those questions if he had given me three years instead.

"Oh, is that all?" said the cantor cheerfully. "Don't worry, my reverend father. If that's all, your wish shall be granted. Let me go to the King instead of you, and I will answer all three of his questions."

The old curate tremblingly agreed. The cantor dressed in the curate's ecclesiastical garments and went straight to Buda.

He was immediately admitted to the King's presence, because Mathias had given the order. The King was curious to find how the old curate would answer his questions. All the grand courtiers were around him expecting to have their fun with the simple old man.

"Well, my good man, tell me where the sun rises," said the King.

The cantor looked deliberately around at the crowd of courtiers who hardly could hide their amusement. Then he bowed before the King and said: "The sun rises for Your Majesty in Buda, for me in Cinkota."

The King laughed heartily, and the courtiers joined him in laughter. "He certainly is right," said King Mathias. "Let's hear what he has to say to this: How much is the King worth?"

The cantor pretended not to be ready with his answer. He scratched his head, looked around as if seeking the solution. The grand cavaliers prepared to laugh at the curate's expense. They hardly took the trouble to conceal their smiles.

"Well," said the cantor, "if our Lord Jesus Christ was

worth thirty pieces of silver, then our King is worth twenty-nine silver pieces."

The King was very pleased with the answer, and the court folk could not help agreeing with him.

"Now, the third question," said Mathias. "What does the King think at this moment?"

"The King thinks he is speaking to the curate of Cinkota, while it is his humblest subject, the cantor, who is standing before his throne."

The King was delighted with the cantor's answers and said: "Since you answered my questions so cleverly, I am going to make you abbot."

"Thank you most humbly, Your Majesty," said the cantor, "but I really do not deserve such distinction. I would be most grateful if Your Majesty graciously bestowed the title on our old curate. He would be so happy with it."

"Well," said King Mathias, "be it as you desire! But you deserve a reward. Ask a favor and it shall be granted!"

By that time the cantor had grown very thirsty, and without hesitation he said: "I wish, Your Majesty, that the pint bottle were double as large as it is."

"Granted!" said the King. "I hereby order that the pint in the inn of Cinkota shall hold double as much as an ordinary pint."

And from that day on Cinkota had the "grand pint" which holds double, but for which people do also pay double.

"Why, Peter is growing to be as good a story teller as



THE KING WAS DELIGHTED WITH THE CANTOR'S
ANSWERS

Tamás *bácsi!*" said an old woman to the mother of the young man, when he finished the story amid great applause.

"God grant it," the mother said, glowing with pride.

"Story, story!" shouted meantime some impatient corn-huskers, who never had enough of stories.

"Now one of the girls must tell a story," teased a young man. "It won't do for the men to have all the heavy work."

The younger girls pulled one of their set by the apron. She resisted, but they pulled and pushed her into the center.

"Erzsók must tell a story, she knows how," her young friends cried. Erzsók blushed and tried to hide her face in her apron. But her friends were determined to show the boys that a girl too could tell a story well.

"Erzsók was the best story-teller in school," they said, proud of her achievement. It took quite a while, but at last Erzsók gave in.

She spoke first in a timid voice which hardly reached those near her. But by and by the story took hold of her, and she told it so that everyone could hear it, even in the remotest corner of the barn.

Her story was "The beggar woman's twins."



The beggar woman's twins

IN a remote corner of Hungary, over salt mines, reaching deep down into the bowels of the earth, rises a steep mountain.

More than a thousand years ago, at the time when the Magyars conquered the country, there was a castle on top of this mountain. Many centuries later a King of Hungary gave the castle as spoil of battle to György Miczbán. The castle was called Sívár—Saltburg—after the salt mines in the depths of its gigantic foundation. Many strange things happened in and around Sívár while the centuries rolled over it. One of the strangest happened to the wife of György Miczbán. She was a gracious and kind-hearted woman who did all the sweet and nice things that a virtuous lady was expected to do. But while she had all the virtues a good lady of those feudal days could have, she was also as supersti-

tious as the medieval people of those times used to be.

One day a beggar woman asked alms from the lady of the castle.

The gracious lady looked with pity at the poor ragged woman.

"Get some food for this poor creature," she said to a young lady-in-waiting. "And get it quick, she seems famished."

"Bring some of my old shawls to keep her warm," she said to another, as she looked with pity at the trembling poor woman.

When the lady-in-waiting came with the shawl and removed the ragged shawl that covered the shoulders of the poor woman, it turned out that she had twins in her emaciated arms.

At that sight the gracious lady of the castle turned her eyes with horror from the woman, who nearly fainted with hunger and cold. "Get out, contemptible creature," the lady of the castle bade the poor mother of the innocent twins.

In those times twins were considered a disgrace, a testimony of the mother's depravity.

"My gracious lady, don't drive me away," implored the hapless mother. "I am hunted from one place to another. Stones are my pillows, and my innocent babies are starving."

But kind-hearted as the lady of the castle was, her superstition was stronger than her pity, and she repeated mercilessly:

"Away from my eyes with your brats, away!"

The sunken eyes of the poor mother filled with tears. "Have you no heart, you cruel woman?"

"I have a heart, but not for the likes of you," the lady of the castle answered. "Girls, drive her away," she ordered, and turned once more to the despairing mother and cried: "May the wild beasts pursue you, may you not find rest anywhere, you despicable mother of twins."

The desperate creature raised her emaciated arms to heaven and cursed the lady of the castle: "May you have seven babies at once, you cruel, heartless woman!"

And the suffering mother's curse came true. The wife of György Miczbán became the mother of seven babies at the same time.

She was nearly beyond herself with humiliation. If twins were a shame, septettes were a disgrace beyond words.

In her despair she implored her old nurse to kill six of the new-born babies so that the secret of her disgrace might be buried before her husband returned from abroad.

The old nurse was heartbroken. She did not know what to do. She remembered the times when she had nursed the desperate mother of the seven babies when she herself had been a baby. She pitied the lady of Sívár in her ordeal. But she also pitied the six lovely babies and could not bring herself to kill the innocent creatures.

But the lady of the castle implored her so desperately that the old nurse gathered the six babies and promised the mother to destroy the innocent lives.

She went far away from the castle until she came to a river. On the banks of that river there was a fisher hut. The fisherman who lived in it was an old friend of hers and

gladly agreed to take care of the babies and bring them up as his own sons.

She returned to her lady and reported that she had killed the six infants.

From that day on the lady of the castle never smiled again. Nightmares spoiled her sleep. She saw the babies drowning and screamed in her dream because she thought that death was now reaching for her only son.

"No, no, I don't give him," she screamed often in her dreams.

Terrible years passed, and the tortured mother was often on the verge of telling her husband of her dreadful deed. But courage failed her every time.

Little Simon, the Miczbán's only son, grew up the pride of his parents. He learned as much as the youth of that epoch was supposed to learn. He was a daring horseback rider and fenced with graceful skill. He was a beautiful, accomplished young man. Yet his mother never smiled at him, though her heart was filled with love for her son.

When young Simon Miczbán won his first tournament, his father arranged a great fête in Sívár Castle in honor of his victorious son.

Fish was ordered and the fisherman set all his young aides to catch the fish for the castle. It was a grand catch, hundreds of pounds of fresh, luscious fish.

"*Hé,*" said the fisherman to one of his young assistants, "you are the strongest of the bunch, take the catch up to the castle."

The young man, a stately youngster, looking merrily into the world with frank brown eyes, shouldered the heavy catch and carried it with ease, as if it were a mere blade of grass.

When the young fisherman arrived at the palace yard, the courtiers were busy with a friendly little tournament. They clashed swords amicably and dashed around the yard on their beautiful steeds.

The young fisherman delivered the load of fish and then looked curiously at the play of the courtiers. He picked up a sword lying near him on the ground and made a few vigorous strokes with it.

"*Hé*, put down the sword," one of the courtiers shouted at him. "That's not a weapon for you. What is a toy for an eagle isn't a plaything for a raven."

"Why not, sir?" asked Simon.

The courtier thought he could make a good joke.

"All right," he said. "Let's see what you could do with the sword," and he winked at the other courtiers.

"*Hé*, bring a horse for the lad." The grooms brought a fiery, temperamental steed that balked and snorted when Simon started to mount it.

Meantime several courtiers had rushed to tell their young master, the only son of György Miczbán, and all the other lords, of the fun in store for them.

By the time Master Simon, old Miczbán, and the others came, the young fisherman had mastered the horse and thrown six of the courtiers from their horses without much ado.



THE TWO YOUNG MEN FENCED FOR AN HOUR

At that astonishing feat young Simon jumped on his horse and challenged the lad to fight him.

All the lookers-on felt sure that young Simon Miczbán would soon teach the young nobody a lesson. They prepared to cheer Simon and to see the humiliated young fisherman slink home in shamed defeat. To their amazement, however, the two young men fenced for an hour without one getting the better of the other.

Among those watching the two fencers was also the stern, unsmiling lady of the castle, Simon's mother.

The longer the fencing lasted the more startled grew the woman. The young fisherman looked the exact image of her own son. "If he were clad in the same armor they could not be distinguished from one another," she thought, growing more and more bewildered.

At last she could not stand it any longer.

She asked the two young men to stop fencing and to come up to her in the gallery from which she had watched them.

"Who are you, my lad?" the sad woman asked the young fisherman.

"I am a fisherman."

"I know, but tell me more about yourself," she said impatiently.

"There is not much to tell about myself. I and my five brothers——"

"Five brothers!" exclaimed the lady of the castle. The blood left her cheeks and her eyes seemed to see ghosts.

"Go on," she said, controlling herself.

The young fisherman told about the simple life he and his brothers led with their father, the old fisherman.

"Who is your mother?" the lady of the castle asked in a faint whisper.

"We know nothing of our mother, she died when we were born," he said.

"How is it that you are fencing as skillfully as if you were reared at court?" asked old Miczbán, who had followed the scene with great interest.

"Our father had an old recluse teach us everything he knew. And the hermit was once a cavalier at the King's court, so we learned things fishermen aren't supposed to know."

At these words, the old nurse, who had grown very old indeed, threw herself in front of her mistress.

"My gracious lady, he is your son. And his five brothers are your five sons. They are Simon's six brothers."

A great scene ensued, with explanations on all sides.

The proud lady embraced her new-found son with sobs and tears. She humbly confessed to her husband what happened when she and the beggar woman cursed each other.

The nurse told her part, and when old Miczbán learned that he had seven sons, all as fine lads as Simon, the only one he knew, he was as happy as a man can be.

He immediately sent five beautiful fiery steeds for his sons and a coach to fetch the old fisherman.

There was a celebration all over the estate, and Sívár became the liveliest place in the country.

By and by the seven young men married, and the court echoed with the laughter and shouts of their children.

The grim old lady learned to smile and to laugh with her grandchildren. Her heart was full of love for them. But most of all she loved two of them. A brown-eyed, curly-haired boy and a blue-eyed, golden-locked little girl. The two were twins.

"Oh, I am so glad it ended well," said young Laczi with a sigh of relief. "I was dead afraid it would never come out that the boys were saved." And he sighed again.

"Well," said Uncle Tamás, gently embracing Erzsók, "you certainly did well. I could not tell the story better than you did, my dove."

The gypsies began to tune fiddle, clarinet, and cymbal. Balázs *néni* and servants entered with huge dishes and great cans of wine.

The corn-husking feast had reached the stage of relaxation. Everyone was merry and happy.

When the food was disposed of they cleared the floor. The gypsies who had played sad tunes and gay melodies while the corn-huskers were eating and drinking now started a lively *csárdás*.

I don't need to tell you what followed. But I must tell you that not only the young people danced, the older ones could not resist either.

"*Ritka árpa, ritka búza, ritka rozs*
Ritka kis leány takaros——"

The sharp-pointed rhythm leaped into their bones and lifted their feet. *Hej, hej!* The older ones too were up, answering the call of the most popular *csárdás*.

*"Vörös bort ittam az este,
Ragyogó csillagom, galambom."*

intoned the fiddle. The clarinet and the cymbal adjusted themselves to the fiddle, and the dancing crowd stamped with renewed vigor. A fine baritone voice rose and all the others fell to singing the merry tune while their feet kept moving in the slow *csárdás* steps.

By the time the gypsies had arrived at the agitated *friskó*—

*"Minek a szöke én nekem
Mikor én a barnát szeretem?"*

the older ones had had their fill and fell panting back to their seats. They returned to wine and pipe, and the floor was left entirely to the young set.

And the young ones needed more space now that the *friskó* precipitated them into whirling and prancing and waving of handkerchiefs.

Gypsies never get tired of playing. There is some mystery about it. Nobody has ever known a gypsy tired of playing. Fortunately, they sometimes get thirsty. That is when they wind up the *friskó* that follows the *csárdás* with a flourish, warning the dancers of the end of a dance.

"*Rádás, rádás!*" shouted the merry dancing crowd, thus demanding an encore. But Balázs *bácsi*, the master of the

house, was ready with the flask of wine for the gypsies. And a conscientious old woman said:

"We aren't through yet with the corn. We'd better see to it again. And maybe Uncle Tamás will tell us another story."

The party was soon again in full swing at husking the rest of the corn. And Uncle Tamás, elated by the *csárdás* and the good Balázs wine started without further ado to tell the story of "The dog market in Buda."



The dog market in Buda

ONE day Mathias felt, as he often did, tired of the King business, and dressed up as a wandering student, in quest of adventure. He often was bored with the royal game, its stiff formality, its lack of sincerity. He hated the unreasonable adulation showered on him because he was a king, and yearned for simple friends and manners.

When the wandering student left the palace he came across a poor peasant leaning against the wall of a house. The peasant stared with tear-filled eyes unseeingly, and wore such an expression of desperation that Mathias stopped in front of him and asked:

“What is the matter, Uncle? What makes you so sad?”

"Oh, I am in great trouble, kind stranger. In very great trouble indeed. I have been cheated out of everything I had, and the scoundrels who ruined me won't listen to reason and justice. I am facing starvation. And the worst of all, they took my last cow for taxes. Now I have even no milk for my children. The King is rich enough, he should not take my cow for taxes. I have nothing left except my dog, and he is not worth any money, because he is only a common cur."

A yellow cur nestled at the feet of the poor peasant. Mathias asked: "Is this your dog?"

"Yes, my Bodri is the only friend I have in the world," said the peasant. "He is better than my fellow brethren. Bodri never cheated me!" He looked tenderly down at his dog.

"Why, you know," said Mathias, "your Bodri is exactly the kind of dog King Mathias likes. I am sure he would buy it from you and pay you a great price. I am sure he would."

"But as much as I love my dog, I must admit he is of no special race. He is not a dog for kings—Bodri is only a common cur," the peasant said.

"Never mind. The King likes common people and he likes common dogs. I know he will be glad to buy your dog."

"But how can I get to the King? They won't let me into the royal palace, shabby peasant that I be!"

"Now, Uncle! do as I advise you," said Mathias "Just tell the guard at the gate of the palace to take you with the dog straight to the King. You will see everything will be as I tell you."

The poor peasant thanked the stranger for the advice and started with slow steps toward the royal castle.

At the iron-wrought gates he asked the guards to take him to the King.

"I want to offer my dog to His Majesty," he said timidly, prepared to be chased away from the gorgeous palace.

But to his amazement the guard showed him politely into the courtyard and asked a halberdier to take the man and his dog straight to the King.

They went through marble corridors, through gilded rooms, through gorgeous halls where hundreds of mirrors reflected the peasant and his dog a thousandfold, and then they entered the throne room.

The peasant threw himself at the feet of the King, who sat in full regal splendor on the golden throne.

"Your Majesty, I love my Bodri, but I hear he is the kind of dog you like. May I offer him to Your Gracious Majesty?"

"Get up my friend," said the King and walked down the steps of the throne to assist the stiff-boned peasant to get up from his cracking knees.

As he touched the peasant the poor man looked for the first time at the King's face. He stared and stared and did not believe his eyes.

With a twinkle in his eyes the King said: "Well, Uncle, you have suffered injustice; I will have my men look into the matter. But meantime I will buy your Bodri. And as you



"I WANT TO OFFER MY DOG TO HIS MAJESTY"

love your dog, it must be hard for you to part with him, so I will pay you a price to compensate you for the loss."

And the King handed the speechless peasant a silk purse with a hundred gold pieces.

Before the peasant found words to thank the King, Mathias said kindly: "And, Uncle, if you get very lonely for your dog, just let me know, and I will send him to you for a visit with one of my men."

The peasant was quite overcome. He hardly knew how he got out of the throne room, how he passed the gorgeous halls where the mirrors reflected him a thousand times, and in what way he got through the gilded rooms and marble corridors. His head was swimming, and there was only one thought clear in it:

"I have a hundred gold pieces. I can buy a farm and cattle and poultry; we can live and work happily and safely."

He remembered Bodri with something like heartache, but the heartache was not very strong. He knew his beloved dog would have a splendid life with his wise and kind new master.

The peasant bought the best farm around the village, and cattle and poultry, and a new dress and a silk shawl for his wife, and shining patent-leather top boots for his children, and a new round hat with maiden-hair fern and a new pipe for himself. The village gasped at all the splendor. "What happened?" the people asked each other.

Their curiosity drove them to ask the poor man where he got the fortune.

"Well, I sold Bodri to the King," the peasant said, sucking mightily at his new pipe. He blew clouds of smoke and spat five feet away, to the admiration of his guests.

"You sold your Bodri to the King?" said a neighbor. "All right, but what we want to know is where you got the fortune you are now spending for all the new things you bought."

"Well, I tell you, I sold my dog to the King," repeated the peasant complacently. He sucked some more at his new pipe, blew out bigger clouds of smoke, and aimed to spit five and a half feet away.

"Yes, you sold Bodri, but——"

"Well, what more do you want to know?" drawled the peasant when the neighbor stopped without finishing the sentence.

"About all the money you have. You must have stacks of it the way you go about spending it."

"Well, I got all of it from the King for my dog."

"*Ejnye*, you are fooling us," said one of the neighbors impatiently.

"Am I? I am not," replied the peasant.

"You don't mean to say the King has given you money enough to buy the best farm in the county, the cattle, poultry, dresses, shawls, top boots and everything else, for one dog, and a yellow cur at that!"

"That's exactly what I do mean," said the peasant. King

Mathias likes yellow curs more than any other kind of dog."

The men at first did not believe the peasant's story, but when he had repeated it over and over again they realized he had told the truth.

They hurried home, told the story to their wives, and soon there was not a man, woman, or child in the village who did not know what a fabulous price King Mathias had paid for the peasant's shabby yellow cur.

Hew! There was some commotion in the village. Yellow curs who had run with their tails between their legs, driven from house to house, became now objects of most loving care.

Every man and woman who had a yellow cur decided to start next day to Buda with the unkempt creature. Those who did not own yellow curs tried to buy them, creating quite a price for the hitherto worthless animals.

Next morning a multitude of people started from the village, every one carrying a yellow cur or two of them.

As they marched through the country they passed other villages and hamlets, and wherever they passed people inquired what their queer procession meant.

"We are going to sell our dogs to King Mathias. He prefers yellow curs to any other kind of dogs, and he pays a fabulous price for them," they told the inquirers.

As soon as the people heard the news they rushed to grab their own yellow curs. With utmost haste they threw themselves into their Sunday garments and ran after the procession to join it.

What a barking accompanied that march to Buda!

All along the road the other dogs of the villages and hamlets added their barking to the dog conversations that filled the air.

The procession had swollen into an immense crowd by the time they reached Buda. The fine people of the King's residential city were frightened out of their beds when the people and the dogs entered the city early at dawn.

An old man with a stiffly waxed moustache that stuck out a foot wide on each side of his face was elected leader of the procession.

He knocked at the royal gate and patted his restless cur over the head. "*Hé*, friend Bimbó," he thought, "you don't know what a rich man you are going to make of me. Strange taste of the King to buy yellow curs."

The people pushed each other, everyone wanting to be among the first to sell their dogs. The dogs barked furiously, women screamed as they were crushed in the crowd; men cursed and shouted; it was a most extraordinary scene.

The court people rushed to the gate and asked what the peasants meant, overrunning the royal palace with their ugly yellow dogs.

"We want to sell the dogs to His Gracious Majesty, King Mathias, long may he live!" said the leader, stroking his waxed moustache that stuck out a foot wide on each side of his face.

"What?" shouted the palace guard nearest to the old man. "You want to sell these yellow curs to the King? Are you crazy? The King has the noblest of all the pedigreed dogs

in the world. You don't expect him to touch these vulgar beasts?" The dogs kept barking furiously all the time, but at these words they outdid themselves with the noise they produced, as if they knew that they were insulted by the palace guard.

The old leader with the waxed moustache remained undisturbed. He knew better. He wouldn't let a flunkey tell him what the King thought of yellow curs. Hadn't the King paid Bodri's owner so much for the dog that he could buy the best farm in the vicinity, cattle, horses, poultry, new dresses and shawls and patent leather top boots and hats and pipes, and everything he wanted?

"Well, friend," the old man said to the palace guard, "you just go to the King and tell him we have brought yellow curs for him."

The palace guard didn't know what else to do, so he went to report.

But he came quickly back.

"Tell the people the King sent a message!"

"Aha," said the old man. The word was shouted down the line until they knew at the other end of the crowd that there was a royal message for them.

"Well, friend," said the old man with the waxed moustache sticking out a foot wide on both sides of his face, to the palace guard, "what is His Majesty's—may he live long——"

"*Éljen!* May he live long!" shouted the crowd, interrupting their leader's speech.

"What is the King's message to us?" the old man asked.

"The King ordered you to betake yourselves home with your yellow curs. And to get off as quick as lightning."

"But the King bought Bodri and told his master that he cares particularly for yellow curs. That's why we brought all the yellow curs to market," remonstrated the leader.

"Yes, His Gracious Majesty bought Bodri all right, but his message to you is that there was only once a dog market in Buda and there never will be one again."

And to this day you can hear Magyars, when they are short of money and have nothing but a yellow cur, say enviously: "There was only once a dog market in Buda!"

The last corn was cleared of its husk long before Uncle Tamás was through with the tale. The people were enjoying the story, and paid with hearty laughter for the pleasure.

"*Hej*, I should have liked to see that procession going back with hanging noses and with all the yellow curs," said one of the guests.

"They must have hated yellow curs after that, I guess," said a young matron.

"I am afraid they must have kicked them awfully to take their own foolishness out on the poor curs," said a girl.

"Well, I am sorry there never will be another dog market in Buda. I could use some money right now, and I could spare my yellow cur," said old bachelor Baróti, thinking of his considerable debt in the village inn.

"And I am glad that there was only once a dog market

in Buda, because I wouldn't want to part with my Bundás. And he is a yellow cur."

Everyone laughed at little Pista who looked all love for his Bundás and all fear another dog market in Buda might deprive him of his four-legged pal.

The snow had ceased falling. Bright stars twinkled in the clear sky. The people filed out in high good spirits, tramping homeward in the crunching snow.

One door closed after the other behind the home-coming people. Snow covered the village, and stillness spread out over snow and roofs.



Háry János

THE village inn was crowded. At every table sat as many peasant lads as possibly could be seated around it. White wine and red wine twinkled in the bottles and glasses on the tables. The innkeeper was busy refilling bottles as fast as they were emptied. The place resounded with applause and laughter. One *éljen* after the other rose from merry throats. And all the *éljens* were directed toward one man, who, sitting at the table of the village magistrate, acknowledged them as his proper due.

Veteran Háry János was the hero of the occasion. And a hero he was indeed, a peerless hero, whose deeds of bravery surpassed anything the heroes of all ages ever accomplished. At least, that's what he thought and said of himself.

Háry János did not believe in hiding his light under a bushel. He was always ready to tell of his extraordinary deeds. Not only ready, he was eager to enlighten the world with them. On this balmy spring Sunday afternoon Háry János was also busy telling of his heroic deeds and acts of bravery unsurpassed. He told his admiring listeners how he had gone all over the world with a sword easily drawn from its scabbard, and how he had destroyed whole armies single-handed.

"And when I came to the end of the world, I sat down on the edge of it and rested, with my feet hanging into the empty spaces," he finished one of his stories. A roar of laughter followed these words, but Háry János took the laughter as a tribute, not an offense.

"Well," he said, after a deep draught from his glass of red wine, "all that is nothing. I have done far more astonishing things," and he stroked the waxed moustache that stuck out stiff on both sides of his face. "Nothing!" Háry János repeated with a deprecating gesture.

"Nothing?" exclaimed the magistrate. "Nothing? That's more than much, my friend."

The village lads raised their glasses toward the modest hero. Sitting among them there was a stranger. A young student who wanted to have his own fun with Veteran Háry János. He egged him on.

"Uncle is right," the student said; "the marvelous things he told you are nothing compared to some other deeds of which he is justly proud."

The crowd looked expectantly at Hány János, who coughed modestly at this praise.

He stroked his waxed moustache, drained his glass, sucked at his long-stemmed pipe, and after spitting very expertly at a remarkable distance he said:

"Well, I think one of my boldest strokes was the capture of Napoleon the Great. You know, Napoleon was a great man among the French. But not among us Magyars, and least of all in the eyes of Hungarian hussars."

Though he had never mounted a horse, Hány János always talked of his horse and his riding feats and described himself in his stories as a dashing hussar.

"Well, I must admit the capture of Napoleon was really something worth relating," said the Veteran.

"Somewhere, I can't remember exactly where, Napoleon once came upon us with two hundred thousand of his most select heroes. Two hundred thousand of them advanced on us, who were only a handful of a hundred or two hundred hussars. But each of us was a specimen of the most glorious kind—fire and flame, every single one of us!"

The student interrupted this boast with a powerful sneeze. But Hány János continued immediately:

"Imagine, two hundred thousand French heroes against two hundred hussars. That was a bit. And what do you think, who was defeated?" asked Hány János turning toward the magistrate.

"Who?" answered the magistrate. "I hope the captain



“THE CAPTURE OF NAPOLEON THE GREAT”

of the hussars had sense enough not to fight against such an over-powering army."

"Sense? Yes, he had sense, but he also had courage. And I tell you, we did fight the French! We did indeed! I was among the first who stormed toward them, and they fell left and right like the flies when frost sets in. It was a spectacle! The sun stopped on the horizon to witness the miracle of two hundred hussars conquering two hundred thousand French."

The stranger interrupted again with a powerful sneeze. But Háy János continued: "Well, when the French realized what two hundred Hungarian hussars were apt to do to their army of two hundred thousand, they took to their heels and ran. How they did run! It took away our breath the way we had to ride in their pursuit. Well, but hussars can ride like the lightning, and there was no escape for the two hundred thousand French soldiers."

Háy János emptied the glass of red wine that stood in front of him, and wiping his moustache with the large bandanna handkerchief, he continued: "While I was riding like lightning I spied the chief in the midst of his fleeing army, and I set after him. His feet rested in golden stirrups, and his horse hardly trod the ground. It seemed flying. But if his horse seemed flying mine did positively fly. And soon I was at his side. The chief of the French army had reached the outskirts of a forest when I heroically got hold of him."

“‘*Hé*, you,’ I shouted as I caught him by the collar. ‘Confess that you are Napoleon, aren’t you?’

“In great confusion he tried to wiggle out of my viselike grip. But, ha-ha, there was no escape from the iron hand of Háy János. He soon realized it and said: ‘To tell the truth, my hero, I am Napoleon. Spare my life, my hero, and I shall reward you as it befits you and me. Spare my life. Ask whatever you want as reward, you know the Emperor of France is rich in treasures.’

“‘Ho-ho,’ I said to Napoleon, ‘you can’t tempt Háy János. You just follow me to the captain of the hussars.’”

The strange student again interrupted with a powerful sneeze. Disregarding it, however, Háy János continued:

“Napoleon saw there was nothing left but to obey my command. I put him in chains, and he followed me. As we rode we encountered a regal coach drawn by six white steeds. In the coach there was a lady in rich garments, all covered with gold and diamonds. When the lady caught sight of us she exclaimed in horror: ‘Good gracious!’ And when I looked at her I saw it was Napoleon’s wife, Maria Luiza, the daughter of our gracious King Ferenc.

“Maria Luiza covered her face and sobbed: ‘O great Napoleon! Is it as a captive I must see you, my majestic husband?’ And she sobbed heartrendingly.

“‘And who are you, my hero, who captured the Emperor, the great Napoleon?’ she asked me.

“‘I am John Háy, the hero,’ I said proudly to Maria Luiza.

“‘Listen my hero to what I am going to say to you.’ And the lady looked deep into my eyes.

“‘You have done so brave a deed, the like of which no Magyar has ever achieved. A deed that deserves rich reward. If you release my husband I promise you both of us will be your slaves forever.’

“‘Goodness me, my gracious lady,’ I said to Maria Luiza, ‘I know how to behave. If a beautiful woman asks a favor, a real hero will always grant it. My prisoner may go free,’ I said to her.

“‘You are free Mister Emperor,’ I said to Napoleon, ‘go your way.’”

“Napoleon gratefully shook hands with me and, freed of the chain, rode away with his wife. Afterward I found he had put two gold watches into my hand while he had been shaking it.”

At this juncture the strange student again burst out into a powerful sneeze. But Háy János continued:

“As I say, Napoleon left two beautiful gold watches in my hand. One of them I gave to my captain. Unfortunately the lieutenant of my regiment admired the other watch so much that finally I gave it to him as a present.

“I am now sorry that I didn’t keep at least one of the gold watches, because, if I could show it now to you, you would surely believe my story, while without it you might believe it or not.”

But there wasn’t a guest in the inn who doubted Háy János’s story. Everyone knew he was the greatest hero that

ever lived. Many glasses of wine were tendered to Hány János, pouches of tobacco offered to fill his pipe.

After a little pause of drinking and smoking the lads began to press him for another story of his extraordinary adventures.

Hány János stroked his waxed moustache and took a draft of his glass; then he sucked his pipe and spat exactly on the spot at which he had aimed. Then he said slowly:

"Well, I may be telling you of my visit to the King in Bécs. That was a pleasant visit."

To his secret pleasure he saw the student pay his bill.

"I am sorry, Uncle Hány, not to hear of your visit to the King, but I must reach the next village before night," said the stranger. With a last sneeze he left the inn, and Hány János began another story:

"You know I like to go occasionally to Bécs, where our king resides if he isn't at home in his castle in Buda. I like to visit Bécs because many of my old friends live there. Among those friends are several generals, and of course the King himself. His Gracious Majesty is my friend since I saved his life in Padova.

"So I started for Bécs and walked and walked—oh, what do I say? Of course I rode on my fast steed. Believe me, that's as true as I live. If only my good horse were alive you would certainly believe that I reached Bécs in no time."

Hány János scratched his head and sighed with regret that his good horse was not here any more to testify to the ver-

acity of his story. And after a pensive draft from the glass the innkeeper had put before him, he continued:

"Well, as I said, I rode like lightning and arrived in Bécs at sunrise. I immediately recognized the King's house.

"It was easy to recognize it because there was the double-headed eagle on the roof. You know that eagle eats every day a bull for dinner. So, as soon as I recognized the King's house I jumped off my horse and fastened it properly to the fence. Then I went along the guard, every member of which knew me personally—in fact, they all were my friends. Finally I came to the end of the porch and put my hand on the knob of a door.

"The door was of iron, but it did not lead to a room. As I opened the iron door I found behind it a white silver door and behind that a glittering gold door. When I opened the golden door I found myself in a room. Before I could look around, the King advanced toward me with outstretched hands and greeted me with great joy.

"'Hallo, old pal!' he said, 'how are you, friend Hóry János? Fine, as I see. You haven't changed a bit since I saw you?' We sat down and I said: 'Thank you, kindly, Your Majesty, I am indeed the same I was when I saved your life down there at Padova. But I'm sorry to say my mare which I rode when I saved your life isn't the same. The good horse is growing old, growing old.'

"As soon as I mentioned my horse the King jumped up from his seat and asked: 'Why, where did you leave your

horse?' He called a servant and ordered my horse to be put into the stable next to his own favorite horse.

"'And feed the mare out of my own horse's golden trough,' he ordered.

"'And aren't you hungry, old pal?' the King asked kindly.

"'I guess I am, Your Majesty,' I said.

"'Just sit down, friend Háy János. I have a bite of roast pork left from supper.' And he took the roast out of the table drawer and put it with a loaf of white bread in front of me. Then he called into the next room: '*Hé*, Mother, have you got a little *slivovitza*?'"

"'Sorry, Father, there isn't any left,' answered the Queen from the next room. 'My lackey just drank the last mouthful of it. But why don't you send a guard over to the inn for some *slivovitza*?'"

"'You are right, Mother,' said the King. He took out some money from his trousers pocket and sent a guard to the inn round the corner.

"'You could see that the King had sent for the *slivovitza*, because the guard was back in no time, and they had certainly given him full measure.

"'Well," drawled Háy János, "there we were sitting, I and the King, drinking and chatting of old times. We recalled many of our adventures in the last war.

"'You bet we had a good time.

"'But all at once a noise broke in upon us as if two armies were clashing. The royal boys had got into a fight over my



"I RECOGNIZED THE KING'S HOUSE"

richly ornamented side-bag. I hadn't noticed the children before.

"'You little rascals,' cried the King, waving his long-stemmed pipe toward the boys. 'Don't you see who is here? Put down the *tarsolya*. Come and shake hands with Uncle Háy János.'

"At this command the royal children put down my *tarsolya*. They came and shook hands with me most respectfully.

"I dug into my side-bag and took out a *krajcár* for each boy. But the King did not let me give them the *krajcárs*. 'No, no, old pal,' the King said to me. You mustn't spoil the children. And you, brave Háy János, will need money yourself.'

"With these words the King filled my hands with money. I thanked him kindly and then said good-bye.

"I took my well-fed mare out of the royal stable and rode home like lightning.

"I was a rich man, because the money the King had given me was quite a fortune. The coins were silver *tallérs*, but, alas, even silver *tallérs* don't last forever. They are gone, gone they are.

"But never mind, I still gratefully remember the King's generosity. Of course I had once saved his life. Down there at Padova. Long may he live! I am sure I'll never have a better friend than the King—long may he live."

"*Éljen! Éljen!*" echoed the crowd in the inn.

Outside it had grown dark, and the peasants got up one by one to saunter home for supper.

"Thank you, Háy János," said the magistrate to the veteran. "You certainly are the greatest hero we ever met. And if you call next time on your old pal, the King, tell him he should send us also some silver *tallérs*."

Háy János shook hands with everyone and pulled himself up proudly. He left the inn and slowly walked to the next village to tell another eager audience this same and some other thrilling stories of his glorious adventures in war and peace.



The brave tailor

IN a remote Hungarian village there lived once, in a low-thatched hut, a poor tailor. He was very poor. As poor indeed as a dormouse. All he had was a rusty needle, a pair of dull scissors, a toothless wife, and a lot of children. An awful lot of children. So many that he hardly could count them. And he certainly didn't remember the names of all of them. He called a few of them, perhaps a dozen of his boys, and nine or ten of his girls, by their names, but the others he never remembered.

And as he was so poor there was usually very little to eat. Often nothing at all. Even corn mush, this food of the poorest of the poor, they had very rarely.

One Sunday, when the family ate a meal of corn mush, the extraordinary thing happened that the tiniest bit of the

corn mush was left on the table. The flies in the house, starved as they were, assembled greedily on that bit of corn mush. And there were so many flies for that tiny bit that they could have eaten up a whole dishful of the corn mush.

The poor tailor got so mad when he saw the flies gobbling up the morsel of corn mush that he swatted down on them with his fist. He hit so ferociously that he killed twenty of them.

The tailor looked amazed at the heap of dead flies. "Am I as strong as that?" he exclaimed. "Why, I wouldn't have thought that of myself!" He felt quite proud of himself.

"Well," he mused, "if I am strong enough to kill twenty flies at one blow, I really might find some job."

He took a piece of cardboard and wrote on it with large letters:

TWENTY AT ONE BLOW!

He hung the board on his neck and started out into the world. His children, those he knew by name and all the rest of them, cried and implored him not to leave them. His toothless wife begged and begged him to stay with them at home. But the tailor, tired of hunger and poverty, was filled with a new sense of power and was so determined to go out in quest of better luck that they could not have kept him at home with ropes. He felt so brave that he did not doubt of finding a piece of luck somewhere in the world.

The poor man started out followed by the wailing of his numerous family. He went without any plan, merely follow-

ing his nose. In his wandering he arrived at a dark, wild forest. By that time he had grown very tired and sat down to rest near a well. He was just about to doze off when the devil came with a huge buffalo hide to fetch water home in it.

The devil saw the card with the inscription "Twenty at one blow" and thought:

"That must be a very strong man. I could well use him as a servant." So the devil stepped up to the tailor and greeted him politely:

"Good-day, friend!"

"Good-day to you," answered the tailor.

"Well, are you really so strong that you can make 'twenty at one blow'?"

"Ahem," muttered the tailor between his teeth, not taking the trouble to open his mouth.

"Wouldn't you become my servant?"

"Why not, if you pay good wages?"

The devil was glad to get such a strong servant, and they immediately closed the bargain.

The tailor was to serve the devil for three years. His only duty was to fetch water and wood for the devil's household. If he was satisfactory, he should get at the end of the three years a sackful of gold.

The devil and the tailor shook hands over the bargain, and then they went home. It turned out that the devil had as many children as the tailor, even two or three more, yet he remembered the names of every single boy and girl.

The boy devils were hot from their play—rough playing it

had been—and soon emptied the buffalo hide to the last drop.

“Now we have a servant to fetch water,” said one of the devil boys.

“*Hé*, get us some more water,” said another, wiping his mouth with his hairy arm.

The tailor got terribly frightened. All his courage dropped down into his boots, and as the boots were leaking at the toes, the tailor’s courage oozed out at his toes. “What can I do to keep my place and to get the sackful of gold at the end of the three years?” he mused. He racked his brain, and perspiration broke out on his brow.

“I could manage to drag the empty buffalo hide to the well, but I certainly couldn’t move it a step if it were filled with water,” he thought.

With a heavy heart did he drag the buffalo hide to the well and sat down beside it, speculating desperately what he could do.

Meantime the devil family got tired of waiting, and they sent one of the young devils after him. The tailor was nearly at his wits’ end.

“Now they will find me out, and the devil will chase me away,” he thought sadly. “No sack of gold for my hungry family,” he sighed.

In his worry he poked around the well with a stick. When the young devil saw him doing that he asked:

“What are you doing, brave tailor?”

“Well,” answered the poor man, “I thought it not worth while to carry water in small portions. I would rather

dig up the well and carry the whole thing home at once."

"Oh, don't do that," implored the young devil. "My mother is blind, you know, and she might tumble into the well. I will rather fetch the water every day instead of you."

The tailor was overjoyed with the proposition, but did not show how glad he was.

"Well, if you don't mind fetching the water every day, I am willing," he said.

Next day the devil mamma sent the tailor for wood.

"Don't bring less than three carloads full at once."

But there was no car, nor were there horses. They expected the strong man to carry the three carloads himself.

"Hew!" the tailor whistled through his teeth. "That's another fine job for me. To carry three logs would be too much for me, and they expect me to bring three carloads full at once."

Our poor man scratched his head. Then he went slowly into the forest. Again he racked his brain. What to do? The sack of gold for his hungry family! Not knowing what to do he started idly to tie logs together. Again the devil family grew impatient when he did not return for a long while. They sent another of the devil youngsters after him.

"What are you doing?" the young devil asked.

"What am I doing? Well, don't you see? You don't think that I will trifle with the wood and come out every day into the forest to fetch it home piecemeal? I will take all the wood there is at once and be done with it."

Our poor tailor said all that with such ferocious impatience

that the young devil got quite frightened. He implored the tailor not to carry all the wood of the forest home at once. "You know," he said, "if you take all of it home they will burn it up in no time, and then there will be no wood left for the winter. We would freeze in winter," he said. "I would rather carry home wood every day instead of you, if you let me," the devil boy proposed timidly.

That certainly suited the poor tailor. But he pretended indifference and condescendingly said:

"If you would rather come every day to the forest to fetch wood instead of my carrying the whole wood home at once, I am willing. Have it your way."

The young devil shook the tailor's hand gratefully and immediately started to work. He pulled down the top of a beech tree and wanted to bend and fasten it to the trunk. While the young devil tried to bend the top downward, his belt burst and he cried out to the tailor:

"Please come and hold the top of the tree. My belt broke and I must fasten my trousers. Quick, quick!"

The tailor could not refuse the request and took hold of the top of the beech tree. The moment the young devil let the tree loose it snapped up and catapulted the tailor with such force into the air that he fell down on the other side of the forest.

As the tailor reached ground a rabbit sprang out of the bushes and ran in the direction where the surprised young devil looked for his vanished companion. The tailor ran after the rabbit as if he were chasing it.



CATAPULTED THE TAILOR INTO THE AIR

"Such a little beast," he mumbled. "Here I have jumped over the forest to catch it, yet cannot get hold of the nimble creature."

When at home the young devil told the story, the devils held a family council over it. Their servant was a puzzle to them.

They decided to put him to one more test, and if he stood that too, they thought it would be better to pay him his wages and send him home.

That morning the strongest of the young devils went with the tailor into a near-by meadow. He brought a whip and a club and challenged the tailor:

"Now, let's see how strong you are. Can you crack the whip as strongly as I can?"

The poor tailor made a contemptuous gesture. "You'd better keep that whip and don't let me touch it. I might crack it so that it chips the eye out of your head."

"Let it be chipped out," challenged the strong young devil.

"Why, you just try first," insisted the tailor.

The young devil took the whip and with a powerful swing cracked it so that the tailor made a somersault.

"That's nothing," he said, when he came down on his feet again. "Now you be careful to protect your eyes when I am taking my turn at the whip." And he looked so self-confident that the young devil thought it might be wise to take the strong man's advice.

"Go at it," he said and covered his eyes with his hand. At that moment the tailor grabbed the club and hit the young

devil so hard with it that he fell unconscious to the ground.

The tailor had to pour eighty-seven pails of water over him to arouse him. And even then the young devil was in a poor state. When he had recovered speech he said to the tailor:

“You certainly have proved that you cracked the whip stronger than I. I must hand it to you. But let’s now go home.”

The tailor supported the beaten devil home where the family again assembled in council.

They were all frightened when they heard that the tailor had cracked the whip so strongly that he knocked the strongest of them into unconsciousness.

They agreed that it was too dangerous to have a man of such strength around. They decided to fill the sack with gold and send him home with it.

“You better be sure to fill it to the brim,” the blind devil mamma cautioned! “That’s a desperate fellow, and we’d better humor him,” she said.

So they filled the largest sack in the house brimful with gold and handed it to the tailor.

But he still held out. “Why, I am not going to carry the sack home myself. If you want to get rid of me you have to send my wages home, otherwise I will stay here until my three years are up.”

He had grown very uppish and talked with so haughty an air that the devil family was more anxious than ever to get rid of him as quickly as possible. So they told two of the

young devils to accompany the tailor home and to carry the sack of gold for him.

The tailor took friendly leave of his employer and his family, shaking hands with each and all of them. And as there were so many children, and he didn't want to slight any of them, it took him fully two hours and twenty-three minutes and seventeen seconds to get through with all the hand-shaking.

Then he started with the two young devils who carried his sack of gold and reached his home without any adventure.

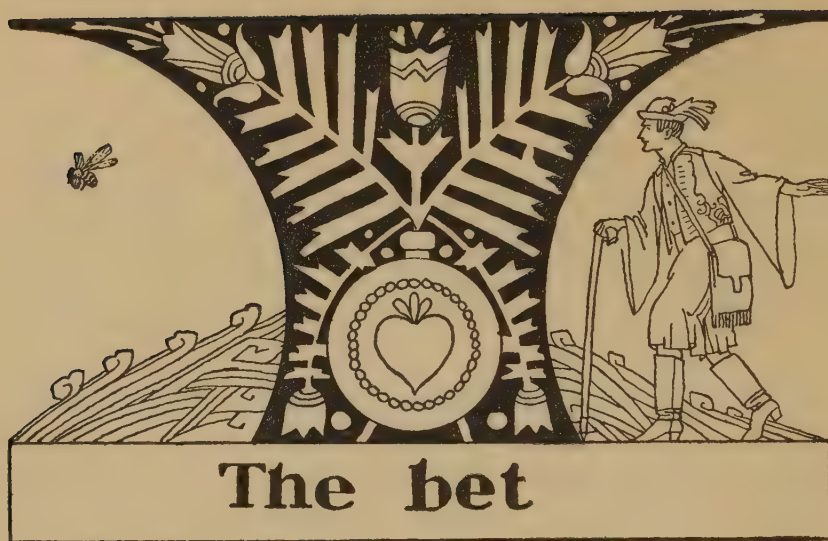
When the children saw their father coming they rushed to meet him. Out they poured at the front door of the thatched hut. When the two devils saw the endless stream of children they got terribly frightened.

"Such a strong father certainly has strong children. And there are only two of us," whispered one of the young devils to his brother, who answered: "You are right. I think we had better take to our heels."

And without much ado they dropped the sack of gold in front of the door and did take to their heels. They did indeed!

They ran so fast that one could not make out which of the two pairs of feet belonged to the one and which to the other.

The tailor's wife and children helped him to drag the precious bag into the house, and with the gold they built a beautiful home and lived in it happily ever after. If they have not died meantime, they certainly still live happily.



THERE was once a rich squire who was so greedy that he wanted to own everything he liked. And he was so conceited that he considered himself cleverer than other people.

This squire one day took a ride in his coach. Driving along he passed a peasant whose horses were far better than his own.

"*Hé*, peasant!" he shouted, "let's exchange horses!"

"I wouldn't dream of it," answered the peasant.

But the Squire was not accustomed to take no for an answer, so he continued to pester the peasant. Finally they agreed that he who could tell a lie that the other wouldn't believe should get the horses of the other.

The Squire settled contentedly in the coach. He considered

himself already the owner of the peasant's two beautiful horses. He couldn't imagine that the ignorant peasant would be able to invent more unbelievable stories than he, the learned Squire.

He took the first turn in the lying contest and without taking much pains to invent anything particularly startling said: "My father had seven he-goats. They were regularly milked. These seven he-goats gave so much milk that it was enough to run seven mills in which all the grain of the country was ground."

"That's easily possible," said the peasant indifferently.

Now it was his turn.

"My father, sir, had so many beehives that we couldn't have counted them even if we had spent five hundred years counting day and night. Counting day and night, mind you!

"It was my duty to guard the bees. I was for a long time on the job without anything ever happening. One evening, however, I observed that one bee hadn't returned to its hive. I reported to my father, and he immediately sent me out to find the missing bee.

"'Never dare to return unless you bring the bee,' my father said to me.

"I slung my side-bag over the shoulder—of course, Mother had filled it with eatables—and started in quest of the missing bee.

"I went and went until I had gone round the world. I

climbed up into heaven but I found no trace of our bee, either on earth or in heaven.

“Remembering what my father had said, I did not dare to go home without the bee. So I decided to go down to hell—maybe the little rascal was hiding there. But the bee was not there either.

“I was pretty desperate and started home at the slowest possible pace. I certainly wasn’t overanxious to meet my father without the bee.

“Imagine, then, my joy, when, walking through a forest, I once got sight of our long-lost bee. It was in a thickly wooded forest. A woodcutter had worked there, and while he was busy on his job a wolf killed one of the oxen yoked to his cart. So the woodcutter had yoked our bee to the other ox and was just about to drive them home with the timber.

“‘Hallo, my good man!’ I cried. ‘Let that bee loose. It’s mine.’ The woodcutter immediately released the bee and handed it to me. The poor little creature was in a bad state. The yoke had been too heavy for his neck and had rubbed it sore. I put a little earth on the wound and my bee immediately grew well.

“I proceeded homeward, and I assure you I went now at a quicker pace!

“There was great rejoicing when I arrived home. Everyone was glad to see me and the bee again. All the neighbors came in to welcome us: the teacher and the school children and Father János and Pastor Gyula and the

village idiot and the oldest people and the children and everybody. They all wanted to hear my adventures.

"They wanted to hear what I had seen in heaven and in hell.

"So I told them all about it. I told the truth and nothing but the truth. So I told them that in heaven I saw a long, long table. Peasants sat around it. Nobody else, only peasants. And they had a glorious time, the peasants had. They drank sweet wine and told each other stories.

"In hell, however, I saw only Squires. None else but gentlefolk. And my, what an awful time the Squires had! The devil was poking them with red-hot rods——"

"You lie!" shouted the Squire at this point unable to restrain himself any longer.

"Of course I do," said the peasant with great glee. "That's exactly what I was out to do to get your horses." And with these words he unharnessed the Squire's pair of horses and drove home with them.

"They aren't as good as my horses," he mused, "but they are worth the little effort it has cost to acquire them.

The peasant stroked his moustaches and a grin spread over his face as he proceeded home at a comfortable trot.



How the Kapys saved their castle

IN THOSE ancient times to which people refer as “the good old days” it was rather easy to acquire a castle. You either had to lend the King a lordly sum of money to conduct his wars, or you fought for the King and sent your men into battle. If the King won, you were entitled to share the spoils. And nothing was cheaper for a king than to reward services by the donation of castles or estates conquered from the enemy. From such castles were their titles of nobility derived, which continued in the families of the fortunate recipients of royal favors.

The Kapys derived their family title from the Castle Kapivár, which one of their ancestors had received from King Zsigmond with whom he had some money transactions.

Later, under King Mátyás, the Kapys happened to be

engaged in an intrigue against the King. Mátyás, in his wrath, sent Imre Szapolyai to attack the castle Kapivár and curtly ordered:

"Destroy the castle to the last stone. Don't return before you have razed it from the face of the earth."

Great was the commotion within the castle. Its holders, János and Gerő Kapy, knew they could not hold out against a long siege, and took worried counsel with each other what to do.

An idea at last struck János, the older brother.

"Let's send the King a sackful of gems. We have rare jewels and incomparable precious stones. Let us send a sackful of them to the King. He will perhaps forgive us for the little mishap and recall Szapolyai.

"That's an idea," exclaimed the younger brother. "Yes," he added enthusiastically, "let us send a sackful of gems. And let us send the sack on the back of our most beautiful horse."

János's wife, Anna Berzeviczy immediately stopped attending to the wounded and sat down to make a large sack of beautiful silk for the gems. But while she was at work with the sack, household duties called her frequently away from the sewing table.

Every time she left the room one or the other of the brothers stole to her work table and cut a little off the unfinished sack. By the time the good lady was ready with her work the voluminous sack had dwindled to a little handbag.

The brothers viewed it doubtfully. Their stingy souls

were satisfied with its smallness, but they wondered how such a little bag could be sent on a large horse.

"It won't stay on the back of the horse," said Gerö. "It will slip off."

"Well, we must get a small horse to carry the small bag," answered János. "I have heard that our neighbor Keczerék has a wonder of a little horse. They say it is not larger than a hunting dog."

"That is a splendid idea. It is cheaper to buy a little horse to carry a little bag of gems than to send a large sackful of jewels on a big horse."

So the Kapy brothers bought the freak little horse and sent two envoys, accompanied by two attendants, to King Mátyás.

The envoys implored the King to forgive the Kapys, who deeply regretted their disloyalty and begged him to withdraw Szapolyai and his forces from Kapivár.

The King listened to the plea of the Kapy envoys with frowning countenance. There was no sign of relenting on his part.

The envoys could not guess that King Mátyás had hardly listened to them. How could they know that the King was greatly distressed and entirely preoccupied with bad news he had received that very morning?

Prince János, Mátyás's only child, his beloved, adored son, was critically ill, and on the very morning when the Kapy envoys arrived the physicians had declared the little prince's condition hopeless.

The envoys saw a frowning king sitting morosely in the gorgeous golden chair. It was, however, not a frowning king but a desperate father who looked gloomily down on them, hardly hearing their words. But when the envoys poured out the glittering gems at the foot of the throne, the father woke out of his trance. It was now the King who in violent anger bade them leave his court.

"Take your trash with you and tell your masters that I don't want the treasures of my subjects but their loyalty. Off with you and your jewels."

Greatly agitated the envoys stopped at the palace yard to discuss what to do.

All around them courtiers, lackeys, and servants talked about Prince János's critical condition and the impending catastrophe. Kapy's envoys learned that the child had not eaten for three days and had not smiled the last two days.

"The child does not smile," whispered one of the Kapy envoys. "That means it does not find pleasure in anything. Our little horse, so extraordinary and so funny in its smallness should interest the child. Shouldn't we try to present the little horse to the sick prince?"

"By the heavens, you are right!" exclaimed the other envoy hopefully.

They asked permission to present the freak little horse to the sick prince, and were overjoyed when their offer was accepted.

One of the attending physicians came out to the palace

yard, where the Kapy envoys were waiting with their little horse.

"Gentlemen," he said, "your present may save His Royal Highness. The funny little animal must give our patient pleasure, and nothing can be more healing than joy and pleasure."

The physician took the rein of the horse and led it to Prince János's bedchamber. The sick child lay pale and lifeless among his pillows of linen and lace. At the strange noise of the dwarf horse's hoofs Prince János opened his sad eyes.

And lo! the sight of the tiny horse worked like a charm. The sick child sat up with a vigorous movement, and a happy smile spread over his bloodless cheeks. The smile became a grin which was followed by such a healthy outbreak of laughter that everyone in the room joined in it.

The solemn doctors shook each other's hands in happy relief. The King's wife, Prince János's stepmother, rushed to the bed to hug the little patient. Nurses, maids, and everyone felt the crisis past, the patient on the road to recovery.

Prince János clapped his bloodless hands and excitedly demanded to mount his new horse.

The physicians rushed off to tell the King the good news. And King Mátyás hurried happily to his son's bed.

When he saw with his own eyes what miraculous change the present had wrought, he asked the Kapy envoys to return to the throne room.

Gratitude was one of the dominant traits of Mátyás the

Righteous! Without hesitation he wiped out the crime of disloyalty held against the Kapys.

"Tell your masters that I forgive and forget their disloyalty against me," Mátyás said to the two envoys. "I will immediately recall Imre Szapolyai and his forces. Moreover, tell your masters that as long as I live their castle shall be under my full protection."

The envoys were immensely relieved. They took leave with respectful gratitude.

King Mátyás watched the departure of the two envoys and the two shield bearers and murmured happily to himself: "They were disloyal to me, but they saved my child."



Shepherds on the Alföld

THE earth lay still under a starlit cloudless sky. Endless and flat the prairie spread out, its darkness enhanced by the shepherds' fires which glimmered over the outstretched *puzsta* like the stars in the sky.

Around each of the distant fires a group of shepherds kept company. They sang softly, or played the *tilinkó* and told the stories that go with the shepherds' fires.

"Wasn't the *fata morgana* glorious this morning?" said young shepherd Pista, to his comrades who lounged around one of the blazing fires.

"It was, my boy, it was," answered old shepherd András. "I have seen it often, and that means something, because I have eaten the greater part of the bread of my life. But you are right, that mirage of ours was seldom as beautiful as to-day."

"I saw it too," said young shepherd Pali. "It was like a blue lake high in the sky, and dark forests and green islands seemed to swim in it."

"Did you see the mirage of towers and villages in the trembling air?" asked another one who had shared with them the miraculous sight of the *délibáb*, the *fata morgana*, which thrills the people of the *puszta* Hortobágy on cloudless hot summer days.

"Oh, our Hortobágy," said old shepherd András. "There is nothing in the whole world like it," he said with deep conviction.

"Why, I sometimes wonder whether other parts of our country aren't as beautiful as the *alföld*," said Pali pensively. "I have heard people say that hills and mountains, real lakes and forests are even more beautiful than ours which are only mirages, above the endless flatness of our *alföld*."

Old András was too indignant to reply. For him there could not be anything superior to the quiet flat prairie beyond which he had never gone, though he had eaten already the greater part of his life's bread.

"I should like some day to see hills," said Béni longingly, "and mountains, castles, and big cities. I should like to see the ocean with real ships and——"

"Well, we might at least tell some stories about these things," suggested Ferenc. "I read one in last year's calendar about a castle that belonged to a shepherd. If the others want it too I could tell you the story."

He looked questioningly to the old man who cared only

for the prairie. Ferenc knew the younger shepherds were always willing to hear stories even if they concerned things outside their pastures.

“Go ahead,” said old shepherd András curtly. He sulkily threw a piece of turf into the fire, and looked as disagreeable as possible at the prospect of the story.

But the other shepherds were all eagerness when Ferenc started “The legend of Krasznahorka.”



'**W**AY, 'way back, many centuries ago, there was once a shepherd who, unlike other shepherds, was very rich. He was really very, very rich. He had more gold than he knew what to do with.

That was quite extraordinary, because we shepherds as a rule are not blessed with too much worldly goods. This particular shepherd, however, did not amass his fortune out of his wages.

Bebek was as poor as his fellow shepherds when one day he drove his flock to graze on the side of a mountain. The sheep munched the juicy green grass, and Bebek filled his pipe for a quiet smoke. He hadn't much to do, because Sajó, his shepherd dog, took good care of the browsing flock.

Moving slowly around on the hillside, Bebek's eye fell

on a strange sight. Something yellow glistened in the high grass. He went nearer to the yellow pile, and, lo! it was a heap of gold coins. Bebek hardly could believe his eyes. Yet it was true; he had found an immense treasure of gold.

He emptied the side-bag which hung from his shoulder, threw away the *pogácsas* his wife had baked, threw away the bacon, onions, and the cottage cheese that were to be his midday meal. He shook even the crumbs out of the side-bag and filled it with the glittering gold. But when he had stuffed into it as much as the *tarisznya* would hold, there was still a little mound of gold left. So he filled his pockets, took from his head the *pörgekalap*, and put gold into every space of his garments that could be used for that purpose.

When he had stowed away the last coin and prepared to go home, a stone of extraordinary beauty struck his eye. He picked it up and carried it in his hand.

"The children will like to play with it," he thought, gazing at the stone in his hand. And they did like to play with the sparkling toy, indeed.

Toward evening, when it grew dark, it turned out that the stone was luminous.

"*Hü*, that's fine," said Bebek to his wife. "I will use the stone instead of a torch." And he took it away from his disappointed children.

One day a merchant saw the stone and offered Bebek a hundred gold pieces for it.

"I won't sell it for money, because I have all the money I need. But I will give it to you for a milch cow."



BEBEK HARDLY COULD BELIEVE HIS EYES

The merchant brought the milch cow, but Bebek's children were so fond of the glittering stone that they implored their father not to give it away.

The merchant tried hard to tempt the shepherd.

"I'll give you a whole herd of cattle for the stone," he offered. Bebek refused to sell and continued to use the luminous stone as a torch. The fame of the stone spread and many people offered fabulous sums for it. Buyers came from every corner of the country and harassed Bebek with their offers. He began to fear for his very life. Someone might kill him for the stone he thought. He realized that he had better get rid of the dangerous treasure, and decided to present it to the King.

Bebek went to the Court and asked to see the King personally.

"Why do you want to see the King personally?" the lackey asked.

"Because I want to present a stone to him for the royal children to play with."

Béla IV received Bebek graciously, and was very pleased with the present.

The stone was a crystal-clear diamond, so big that its value was beyond imagination.

King Béla IV appreciated the gift and wished to prove his gratitude.

"Ask me a favor, my good man," the King said to the shepherd. "Anything you ask for shall be granted."

"Permit me, Your Majesty, to build seven sheepfolds on

your grounds." The King considered this a very modest request and graciously granted it.

Bebek went home and built seven castles on the King's ground. He had meant castles when he spoke of sheepfolds. He built them with the gold he had found together with the stone on the Somhegy.

The King didn't mind that Bebek built castles instead of sheepfolds because they served him well in later battles.¹

Shepherd Bebek built the castles Torna, Csesznak, Berze, Solyomkö, Pelsöcz, Szadnár, and Krasznahorka. He liked them all very much, but Krasznahorka was his favorite.

Bebek liked Krasznahorka so much that he chose it as his family residence. Its proud walls rose on a mountain of bare limestone on which no tree grew. But the mountain of limestone glimmered white and was visible far over the country.

Generations of shepherd Bebek's family resided for centuries in Krasznahorka. After the last Bebek the castle became crown property, and the King's captains were its commanders.

In 1575 Péter Andrásy had to flee from Transylvania to Hungary, where King Rudolph made him temporary commander of Krasznahorka.

But Péter Andrásy liked the place, just as shepherd Bebek had liked it, and he settled there for good.

Through centuries of political and military vicissitudes Krasznahorka remained in the Andrásy family, to which it belongs to this day.

And this "sheepfold" of shepherd Bebek is also interesting because it contains a strange mystery. In one of its rooms there is a glass casket in which a beautiful woman sleeps her last sleep since centuries. From time to time her dress falls to ashes and has to be renewed.

But beautiful Zsófia Serédy-Andrássy lies there as if in deep sleep. Nobody knows what mysterious force keeps her body forever from decay, while the dresses in which she is shrouded always turn into ashes.

"That is the story as I read it in last year's calendar," said Ferenc, and drew out his tobacco pouch to fill his pipe.

"I wonder why Bebek liked Krasznahorka more than all the other castles he built. Don't you know why?" said Miska musingly.

"No, I don't know. The calendar didn't tell," said Ferenc.

The other shepherds sat quiet, smoking and stroking their moustaches. The short barks of a shepherd dog and the faint tinkle of a *tilinkó* played at one of the distant fires were the only sounds in the deep stillness of the night.

"There were some good stories in the calendar of two years ago," said István. "Do you remember them, boys?"

"Yes, I liked them, I remember, but I couldn't tell a single one of them," said Jancsi, notorious for his laziness. He loved stories, but his pals never could make him tell one.

"We know you wouldn't remember well enough to tell a story," teased one of his pals, nudging him with the stem of his pipe. "If you only once forgot to eat. If you had lived

in King Mathias' time, he certainly would have taken you to his court as one of his choice lazy men."

"King Mathias!" exclaimed István. "One of the stories I liked in the calendar of two years ago was just about King Mathias the Righteous."

"Well, if you liked it, do tell it," said old shepherd András, who somewhat had forgotten his grouch.

István scratched his head. "Well, I must first think a little how the story ran." He scratched his head again, because that helped thinking. Pulling himself to a comfortable position he at last started to tell the story exactly as he had read it over and over again in the calendar of two years ago. He knew it well by heart. It was the story of "King Mathias' three riddles."



THE most glorious King who ever sat on the throne of Hungary, Mathias the Righteous, had, like all great men, a deep sense of humor, which was coupled with a rare sense of justice. He often made jokes which frequently took the form of punishment for wrongdoers.

Like Harun-al-Rashid, Mathias too liked to walk among his people, to mingle with them. So he learned to know them by his own observation, not only through the eyes of courtiers, as ordinary kings do. One day three feudal lords came to ask some new favors from Mathias. He took them for a horseback ride on the Rákos.

On their way they met an old serf whom the King recognized. Mathias remembered that the old man was clever and of quick wit. He stopped him and asked him:

“Well, is the ‘far’ still far, my good old man?”

"Well, my gracious king, it isn't farther than the horns of my oxen," answered the old serf.

"Well, and how many are the thirty-two yet?"

"Not more than twelve any more."

"But you still could milk three old he-goats?"

"I should say so, my gracious king!"

The King laughed and then proceeded with his companions.

Back in the palace Mathias said to the three courtiers: "You asked me for new favors. If you want me to grant them solve the riddle of my three questions and the old man's answers. Don't bother me with your requests until you have solved the riddles."

The three lords thought it the easiest way to ask the old serf for the solution. They turned back immediately and began to question the old man about the meaning of the first riddle.

"I will solve it if you pay me hundred gold coins," he said. They gladly paid the hundred gold pieces.

"Well, my noble lords, when I was young 'far' was as far as I could see with my bare eyes, but nowadays I don't see farther than the horns of my oxen—that is how far the 'far' goes."

"And what about the second question?" the gentlemen asked.

"I will solve this riddle too, but for that you must pay me two hundred gold pieces." The lords groaned and paid reluctantly.

"Well, that means that I had once thirty-two teeth but have only twelve of them left."

For the third question the old man asked three hundred gold pieces. First they balked at the demand, but then, remembering that the grant of the King's favor depended on the solution of all three riddles, they counted three hundred gold pieces into the calloused palm of the old peasant.

The old serf put the money slowly into his pocket and then said with a sly smile: "Well, my noble lords, I milk the three old he-goats just as I have milked you now. That's what our gracious king meant. May god grant him long life!"

The lords had to smile, a crestfallen smile, to be sure, for they knew that they would never hear the last of the story and that they could not claim favors that day from the King who had played such a costly trick on them.

"Mathias certainly was a fine King, always taking the poor man's side," said Antal, paying homage to the memory of Hungary's most popular monarch.

Smoke clouds rose in the clear and crisp air and mingled with the smoke of the fire. Quietness reigned again.

"I am not half through with this year's calendar," said Tamás, breaking the stillness. "But I like the stories in it as well as any I ever read."

"Go ahead," said old shepherd András again, and Tamás knew he was expected to tell one of the stories he liked.

“Well, I don’t know whether I remember one well enough to tell it.”

“Of course you do,” said István, and like old András he too said: “Go ahead.”

Tamás tried to remember the shortest of the stories, and after a while he began: “The legend of the Bread Stone.”



The legend of the bread stone

THERE is a moss-covered, age-old hill in the northern part of our country, called the Bread Stone.

Once upon a time a poor peasant had a measly little bit of land adjoining the vast property of a rich man. Once the poor man fell desperately ill and was laid up for a year so that he could not cultivate his little property.

Stark misery was staring in his face. Just that year the harvest all around his property was richer than it had been for ages. Shaken with fear that he and his little family would famish, he dragged himself to the fields.

The rich landowner stood idly in the shadow of a wayside crucifix and watched his laborer's harvesting work.

"God bless your work and your servants," the poor man greeted him in a weak voice. The rich man hardly nodded in response. He pretended not to see that the poor man was in desperate want, yet could not beg for help.

But the poor man's blessing worked so that ten men harvested that day more than sixty had harvested the day before on the property of the rich man.

The next day the sick man dragged himself again to the field, which was livelier than ever with bustling workers.

"How happy he who can work and earn and has got so much that he can help others," the poor peasant said to the rich man. "God has given you plenty, may he increase your wealth."

The miserly man ignored again that the bashful poor man had indirectly asked for help.

The sick man left depressed and desperate. His words, however, again worked a miracle.

The grain mounds and the haystacks of the rich man grew mountain high, and even the bread of which the rich man ate swelled into a veritable hill.

Next day the poor man dragged himself again with the utmost exertion to the field. Overpowered by hunger and fear for his famishing infants, he conquered his bashfulness and implored the rich man to give him in God's name a few sheaves of wheat.

The rich man, however, scorned him and refused to help.

The rich man's jeering words stirred the suffering man to frenzy, and in his despair he cursed: "May you and all your belongings turn to stone."

And lo! the very moment the curse was uttered, the mounds of grain, the haystacks, the very man himself and his bread turned to stone.

After that the poor man's luck turned. He started on the road to recovery and prosperity and soon became healthy and wealthy. As long as he lived he never let anyone suffer if he could help it in any way.

And the hill of bread which turned to stone is called to this very day the Bread Stone.

That is why we Magyars say: "He will turn into a bread stone," if a rich man refuses to help his poor brethren.

"Served him right, the cruel dog," exclaimed Peti. "Everyone should turn to stone who lets people suffer when he could help them."

"In my calendar of three years ago—or was it four years ago?—there was also a story of a stone," said old shepherd András, whose interest in the stories had entirely chased away his ill temper.

"Let me see"—he scratched his head with the stem of his pipe—"wasn't it something about the Stone of Refuge?"

"Do tell it, András *bácsi*," asked the younger shepherds eagerly.

"No, I won't. But don't some of you boys remember it?"

"Well, if anyone remembered it, it should be Bandi," said Ferenc. "Every story he ever read seems to stick in his head like the letters in a book."

"Yes, I do remember, and will be glad to tell it," said Bandi of the remarkable memory. With a pleasant voice that did not hurt the stillness of the night he told "The legend of the Stone of Refuge."



LONG, long ago, at the time when the Tartar hordes overran the land of our fathers, terror reigned in the hearts of our people. No grass grew any more where the Tartars passed in their devastating course. They left nothing but ruin and misery in their wake. Wherever the Tartars advanced people fled seeking shelter and safety. Even to-day, if you travel in the region of Szepes, you will be shown near Lőcse a crumbling ruin of a convent that once served as sanctuary to the people of that neighborhood. When their villages and homes were razed by the passing Tartar hordes the people fled to the convent hidden in the midst of a dark forest of fragrant pines on the peak of a towering mountain.

There are hardly any traces of the convent left, yet generation after generation enjoys the ancient story of a

bell which was in the convent at the time of the Tartar invasion.

When at last the Tartars left the ravaged country, the unfortunate people cautiously came out of their hiding places and returned to the spots where their former homes had stood. Wearily they started rebuilding the devastated villages. The convent that had sheltered them during their ordeal began to crumble. Only the belfry with the silver-tongued bell remained erect.

By the time the villages were rebuilt, the people of two parishes situated on two opposite sides of the mountain claimed the bell of the crumbling convent as their property. They quarreled over it bitterly. Both claimed that the convent stood on the ground of their territory.

The conflict threatened to turn into a sanguinary clash among the people of the two parishes, though they had hardly come through the misery of the Tartar invasion.

One morning the same idea occurred to the population of both sides. The people of both parishes started to climb up the steep sides of the mountain. In solemn procession they climbed upward. First long-bearded, hooded priests carrying burning incense and holy water. Then came the council of the parishes in their official robes. The people of the villages followed. Flag bearers carried sacred banners, and the whole crowd chanted sacred songs.

The procession which reached the summit first took the bell from the belfry with solemn ritual. They tied it to a chain and harnessed six bulls to the chain.

But, oh, wonder! the six bulls could not move the bell from its place, though it was only a fragile, little bell. Twelve, then twenty-four bulls were harnessed to the chain, yet the bell did not budge. The people fell on their knees, they were awed. While they prayed and chanted in fear, the procession of the other parish reached the summit.

Now they harnessed their bulls to the chains. They harnessed only two young bulls, but lo! while the twenty-four bulls of the hostile parish could not move the bell, their two young bulls pulled the bell easily down the mountain.

The people of both sides recognized that a miracle had happened. It was clear whose claim to the bell was right. The people of the two parishes stopped quarreling and became friends again.

Only a lonely, moss-covered stone is left as a mark of the place where the people once had found refuge from the Tartars and where the miracle with the bell happened. If you travel through that part of our country, the people will direct you to the legendary Stone of Refuge and tell you its story.

"Yes, Bandi, that's the story I meant," said old Shepherd András.

"Quarrels, always quarrels," he added, musing about the people who never stop fighting. Knocking the ash out of his pipe he said: "Well, boys, what do you think of settling for the night?" But before they could answer, Peti, who had



THEIR TWO YOUNG BULLS PULLED THE BELL EASILY

not said a word the whole evening, put his *tilinkó* to his mouth, and, accompanied by the shepherds' voices, there floated a song into the air:

*"Este van már, késő este
Páztortüzek égnek messze.
Messze, messze, más határon,
Az alföldi rónaságon."*

The voices died out, and without another word the shepherds rolled themselves into their sheepskin *szürs* for the night.

Sajó, the shepherd dog who had been wandering around between the flock and the shepherds around the fire, nestled close to his master, shepherd András, and settled for a watchful sleep.

THE END

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